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Number 87

October 1991

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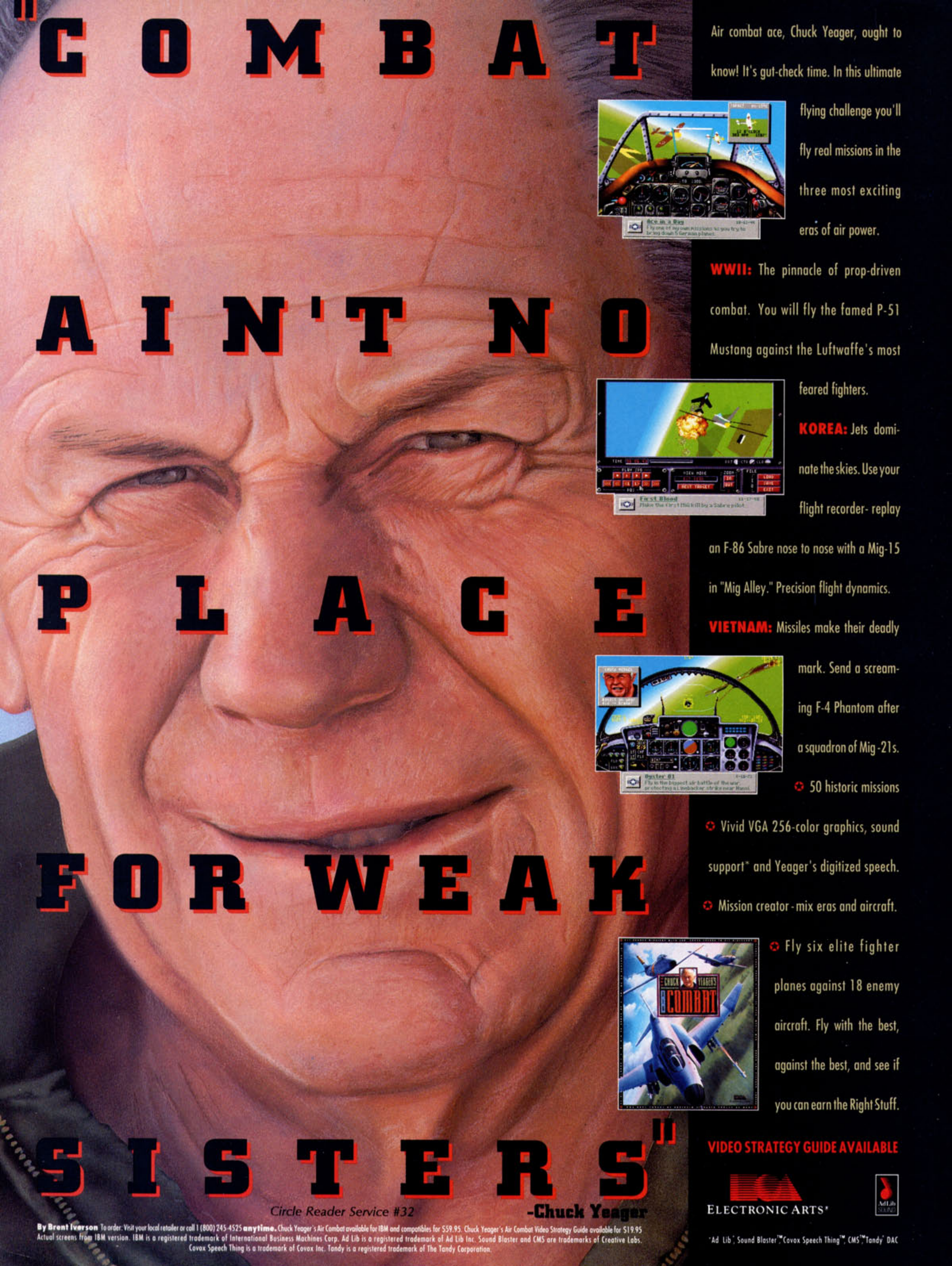
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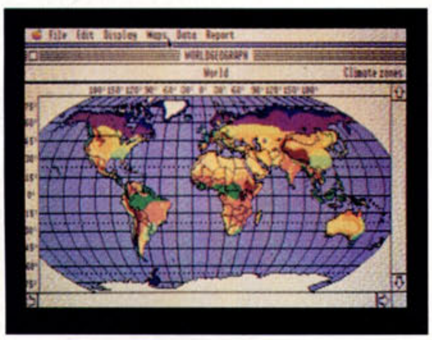
















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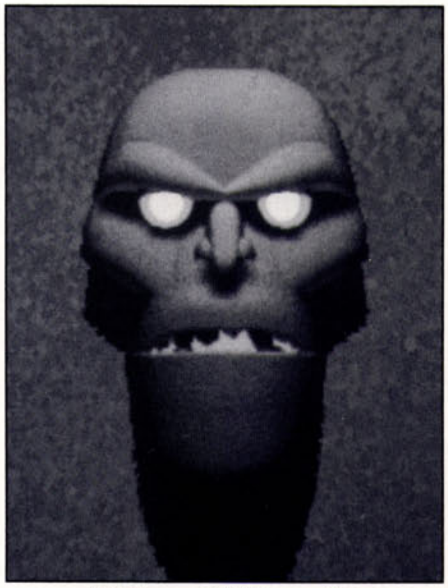
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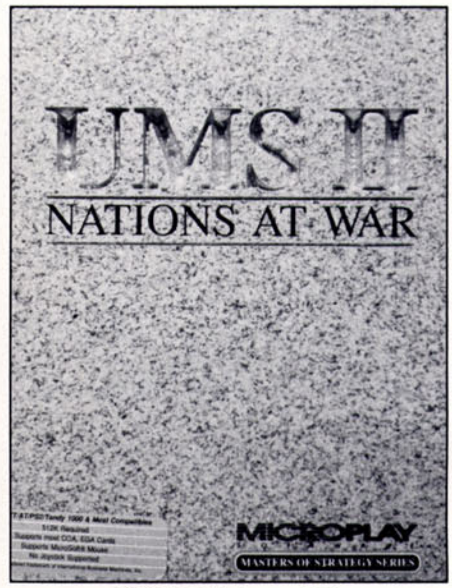
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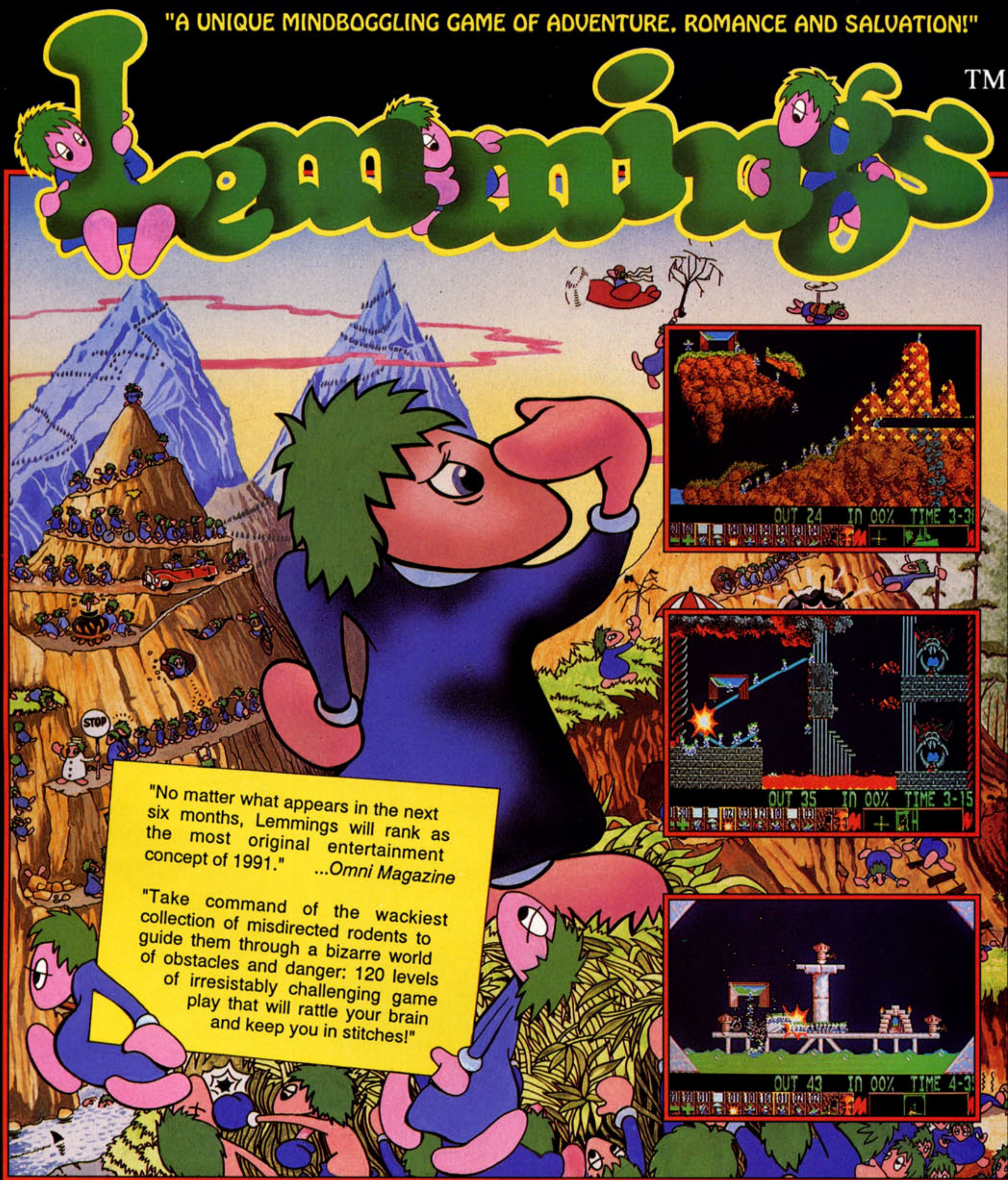
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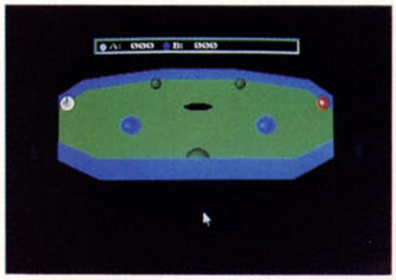
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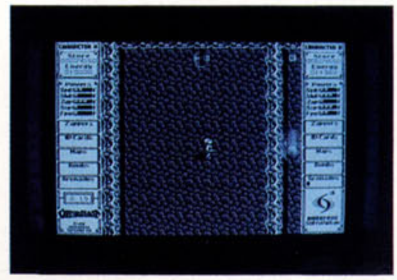
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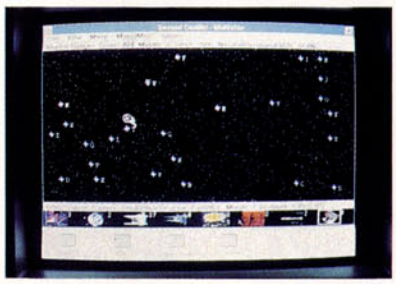


The Terminator


A-10 Tank Killer


Billiards Simulator


Cyberblast


Second Conflict


Chessnet for Windows



Discovery


Midwinter

Bethesda Softworks
Gaithersburg, MD

THE TERMINATOR: "I'll be back," said the Terminator. Well, Arnold was right! This is a first-person perspective search and shoot 'em up game (akin to *Hoverforce*) painted artfully on a wide canvas. The year is still 1984, the place is still Los Angeles, but the player (players if using null modem) assume either the role of Kyle Reese or the Terminator as they search for Sarah Connor. The sights, sounds and "toys" one's character has to play with all have the right feel, and the sound support is quite good. The game features surprising depth and remains fairly true to the movie; the virtual world one plays in really opens up a player's options. IBM ($54.95). Circle Reader Service #1.

Dynamix
Eugene, OR

A-10 TANK KILLER Version 1.5: It's ugly, it's mean, it's the A-10 Thunderbolt II "Warthog". Dynamix puts the player in the driver's seat of one of our Gulf War successes. *A-10 Tank Killer* Version 1.5 brings Dynamix's successful *A-10 Tank Killer* up to date with VGA graphics, improved sound and more missions (including seven based on the Gulf War). It is a very playable game that puts computer pilots in the driver's seat *low* over the battlefield. Ten camera viewpoints, including a "victim's view", lets gamers watch the action up close or from a safe distance. The goals of each mission in the campaign game are connected: Poor performances affect missions later in the campaign and vice-versa. IBM ($59.95). Circle Reader Service #2.

Infogrames
Villeurbanne, France

BILLIARDS II SIMULATOR: If there was ever a program that could make an enjoyable experience out of geometric problems, this would be it. A pool hall potpourri of games like 3-cushion billiards, American "pool" and 8-ball pool is expanded with enough futuristic fantasy pool games to create an intriguing variety. Naturally, two players may play and wagers can be made. Players are concerned with every shot's cushion friction, rebound coefficient, spinning coefficient, etc. as they line up the perfect stroke. Atari ST. Circle Reader Service #3.

Innerprise Software, Inc.
128 Cockeysville Road

CYBERBLAST: What can one say about a game that is basically *Gauntlet* in space? While the game certainly has that coin-op feel, there is something intriguing about this maze-based action game. Would-be spacefarers choose from two different character types before play begins, each rated for its own speeds and strengths. Then one blasts aliens instead of goblins for a fast-moving change of pace from standard dungeon fare. Mac ($49.95). Circle Reader Service #4.

jSOFT
Norcross, GA

SECOND CONFLICT: In the traditions of the classic strategic space conquest games, now those with *Windows* can enjoy something new. *Second Conflict* keeps the number of different unit types to a manageable level and also maintains an easily grasped production and combat systems. Naturally, with a complete pull-down menu system, the myriad of options presented a player are easily accessed and clearly expressed. Six scenarios are provided, but the "design your own" scenario feature, combined with many variations that may be toggled on or off, make this game one of remarkable replay value. Basically, all that a galactic emperor needs is included and presented simply and clearly. IBM ($49.99). Circle Reader Service #5.

Masque Publishing
Englewood, CO

CHESSNET FOR WINDOWS: Billed as featuring the most advanced communications software of any game on the market, *Chessnet* supports both modem and (Netbios compatible) network play. While it sports all of the usual state-of-the-art chess program features, there is also a real-time game clock, "chat" features and an on-disk database of the 1990 World Chess Championship games.

Advertiser Index



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Graphics functions allow players to adjust colors, positions, etc. of the board and pieces. *Windows 3.0* or higher required. IBM ($49.95). Circle Reader Service #6.

Microillusions, Inc.
Granada Hills, CA

DISCOVERY: This is a simple game of exploration and education that really inspires kids to succeed. While the thrust of the game involves the usual scrolling around, jumping, climbing and picking up items (crystals, in this case), the key to certain portions of the puzzle is to listen to the digitized voice rattle off a spelling word or a math problem (the ship's security computer). To cross the barrier, the correct answer must be entered. For educators, Lesson Expansion Disks are sold separately. Amiga. Circle Reader Service #7.

MicroPlay
Hunt Valley, MD

MIDWINTER: "Cops in the Snow" might be the appropriate subtitle for this 3-D import from England. Full of all the polygon-filled graphics that one expects to see in a high-end import product, players take the first-person perspective as they ski, hang-glide and snowmobile their way through destruction and mayhem along humanity's last outpost of civilization during a new Ice Age. Very playable with a mouse and icon interface, the large playing surface (and even larger rules manual) will leave players exhausted for all there is to discover. IBM ($49.95). Circle Reader Service #8.

Space Tech Enterprises, Inc.
McLean, VA

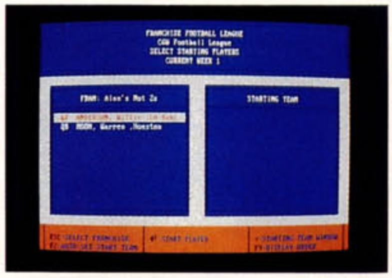
FRANCHISE FOOTBALL LEAGUE — FANTASY FOOTBALL: For Fantasy Football fans, this is one for the record book. Players have complete control as they set up their leagues, perform a "draft night," choose a starting lineup, trade players, put players on waivers or the injured reserve, etc. Updating the database weekly is explained clearly (with an update service made available to purchasers) and statistics are always available. The FFL scoring system is fascinating and makes watching the games each weekend infinitely more interesting! Just right for one's office or gaming group. IBM. Circle Reader Service #9.

Three-Sixty Pacific
Campbell, CA

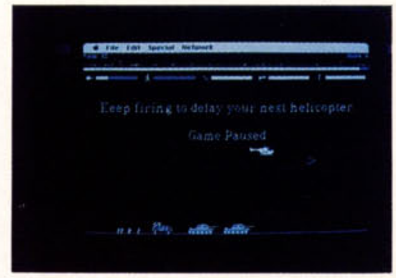
ARMOR ALLEY: Can you say "Rescue Ranger?" If not, learn the name of *Armor Alley*, because the classic helicopter strategy game is back, at least in spirit! For one or two players on the IBM (two players via modem), players are pitted against each other (or can play together in teams of two) in a combination of chess-like strategic planning across "no man's land" and arcade action as they fly their own air support. Macintosh users can have up to four players connected via AppleLink. A compelling classic with a new look and features, modem fans might want to make this connection. IBM ($39.95), Mac ($49.95). Circle Reader Service #10.

Velocity Development
Palatine, IL

JETFIGHTER II — ADVANCED TACTICAL FIGHTER: *Jetfighter II* follows in the footsteps of its predecessor as a state-of-the-art air combat game. The light source shading on sleek aircraft flying through beautiful gradient skies is impressive. Most impressive, however, is night flight. The stars come out, lights flicker in the cities below, office buildings loom out of the darkness. It all looks great.



Franchise Football League



Armor Alley



Jetfighter II



Pro Football Analyst



Mickey's Jigsaw Puzzles



My First Computer Book

JF2 has a lot of depth for the veteran gamer, but is very easy to get into for the beginner. Carrier landings are very realistic (i.e. very difficult). If the player can land on the carrier in *JF2*, he knows he's good. There are 125 missions which take the player through the full range of capabilities of the F-23 and others (dogfighting, bomb runs, etc.). The aircraft at one's command include the F-14, F-16, F-18 and F-23. IBM ($69.95). Circle Reader Service #11.

Villa Crespo Software
Highland Park, IL

THE GOLD SHEET PRO FOOTBALL ANALYST: This is for *real* football fans! While everyone might enjoy the office pool or second-guessing the handicappers, this software puts serious number-crunching behind a player's betting "hunch." Users can custom-design their own prediction and trend formulas and do "what if" analyses for any occasion. With the statistics, formulas and handicapping features, this package includes every statistician's dreams. Three methods for updating information are provided (manual, on-line and subscription). IBM ($59.95). Circle Reader Service #12.

Walt Disney Computer Software, Inc.
Burbank, CA

MICKEY'S JIGSAW PUZZLES: This delightful program is designed for ages 5 and up, since it allows children and/or their parents to set the ideal difficulty level in order to succeed. Fortunately, this time Disney has eliminated the difficult copy protection entirely and put all the pieces together for a quality children's software package. With fifteen different puzzles to choose from (which animate when completed as a "reward"), puzzle sizes range from 4 to 64 pieces. For smaller kids, a puzzle grid can be shown or the puzzle can even be "silhouette" based, allowing tots to easily snap Mickey into the place where his entire body-shape belongs! Puzzles can be printed and the Disney Sound Source is supported (with Mickey himself reading all the prompts, too!). To top it off, even the box art is included as a *real* jigsaw puzzle inside the box, just for kids! IBM ($49.95). Circle Reader Service #13.

Workman Publishing
New York

MY FIRST COMPUTER BOOK: Bialosky Bear wants your kid! This package includes a great piece of software for kids to point and click away at. Music, painting, icon-driven "fill in the blank" stories at the first grade level and *more* are on the main menu for munchkin amusement. VGA graphics are required and the sound support will drive parents to despair and kids to delight in no time! Better than the software, even, is the primer book for little kids, *Bits, Bytes, Bugs & Bialosky the Bear (How to Become a Hands-on Hacker)*. It's everything about computer basics explained simply enough for children (and many adults) with storybook-style illustrations to help visualize the point. IBM, Apple II ($17.95). Circle Reader Service #14. **CGW**

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MS-DOS Screens Pictured.
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Popcorn Not Included IV

Heart of China

Dynamix
PART OF THE SIERRA FAMILY

TITLE	Heart of China
SYSTEM	IBM
COPY PROTECT	None
PRICE	$59.95
DESIGNER	Jeff Tunnell
PUBLISHER	Dynamix
DISTRIBUTOR	Sierra On-Line
	Coarsegold, CA



by Charles Ardai



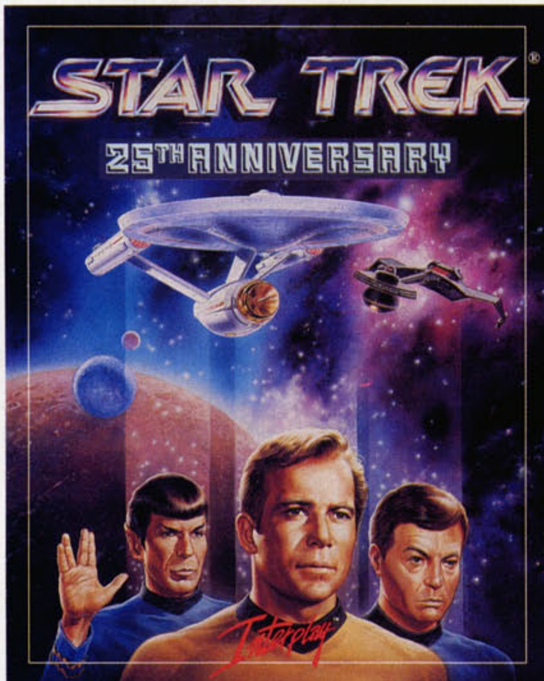
From the start, computer games have aspired to a style and a degree of refinement best described as "cinematic." Only with today's most sophisticated techniques are significant advances being made toward this goal. However, in adopting a cinematic mode, today's games open themselves up to criticism on a cinematic level. It is not enough to achieve movie-quality software; one must also achieve quality movie-software.

It is from this critical standpoint that we will consider the new generation of "Interactive Movies."

In 1930, China was not an entertaining place to be. Not even twenty years out of ancient dynastic rule (and only two years away from Chiang Kai-shek's bloody consolidation of power) and barely a year before the Japanese invasion of Manchuria that was the start of World War II, China was a center of international turmoil and a focus of conflicting and violent impulses. Westerners found themselves the object of intense scrutiny and resentment, while citizens of Asia's various countries faced growing internal hostility. The only people untouched by events were the peasants in the remote heart of the country, living in the pre-modern conditions they had known for generations — and indeed, for the most part, in which they live today.

Heart of China could have been, therefore, a reference to the level of Chinese society that passed through this moment in history essentially untouched by the storm brewing, and later raging, off to the east. It *could* have been such a reference — but this is not what *Heart of China* is about, even though it is set in China in 1930. There are a good many peasants to be found in the game and there *is* a general avoidance of the subject of politics, but from the game's storyline one would never know

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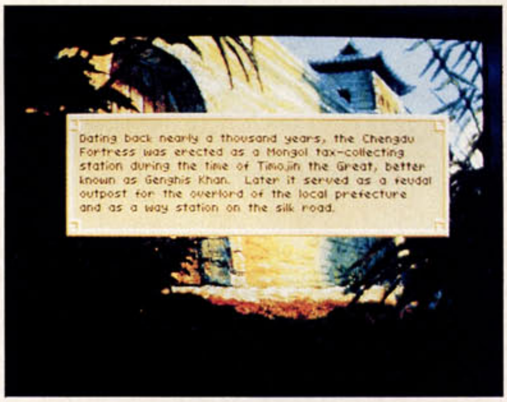
Circle Reader Service #39

that China had ever left the period of warlordism that followed the revolution.

Part of China

"Lucky" Jake Masters, an American flier cut from the Indiana Jones mold, has to rescue a greedy industrialist's beautiful daughter, Kate, from the clutches of a crime lord named Li Deng. Along the way he has the help of a ninja named Chi and a cast of supporting characters who generally do everything they can once they hear *who* it is that Jake is rescuing. (Kate Lomax, it appears, must be a cross between Mother Theresa and Kate Capshaw, and is easily the best-known person in Asia, judging by the number of characters who perk up as soon as one invokes the name of "Nurse Kate.")

First as a twosome, then as a threesome (and sometimes as a onesome), the player has to get Kate to safety. Making this difficult are the legions of goons Li Deng sets on Jake's tail and the constant physical hardships involved in traveling from Hong Kong to mainland China, from there to Nepal, from there to Turkey, and from there to France on the Orient Express. There are vicious snakes, dogs, cows and leopards in the game (all right, the cows aren't vicious); there are planes, trains, tanks and rickshaws; there are seedy bars, seedier bars and even *seedier* bars; and there are plenty of opportunities for kicks, punches, gunshots, swings to safety on pulled curtains and other adventurous doings.



Does all this have anything to do with China? It doesn't really, any more than *Tarzan* and *Heart of Darkness* have anything to do with Africa. In fact, it may have less, since most of the game is actually set *outside* of China. It is as though *Raiders of the Lost Ark* had been called "Heart of Egypt."

Aside from this quibble, however, *Heart of China* is *everything* a good adventure movie should be: fast-paced, tense, ingenious, witty, varied of locale and light of plot. Above all, it is entertaining, with all the amenities today's gamers have come to expect. (The soundtrack is especially good.) It is as genuinely Chinese as a fortune cookie saying, but if one has to choose, it is better for a game to be entertaining than authentic.

Wasn't it Confucius who said that?

Places in the Heart

There are three basic activities in *Heart of China*. One moves from place to place by clicking on "Exit" signs that pop up while scrolling the cursor around the screen; objects can be manipulated within a scene by clicking on them and dragging them in and out of the characters' inventories; and one holds conversations with people met, selecting responses from multiple choice menus.

All of this works quite smoothly, though the use of two different types of inventory screen (one for manipulating objects on a character and the other for using objects to interact with the outside world) takes some getting used to. When there are two or more characters in the player's party, switching control is possible; this also takes some getting used to, but it is crucial since each character has different skills. Jake can fly a plane, for instance, but only Chi can speak Chinese. At one point, the player even has to switch control to Kate, when Chi and Jake are both temporarily out of the picture.

The challenges faced are both of the conventional adventure-game sort — how to get past castle guards, what to give Kubla the Sherpa boy to win his cooperation — and some of the more unusual variety. Among the latter are some conversations that are as tricky to navigate as dense minefields. Jake generally has to push the people he meets just to the edge of losing their temper, their patience or their self-restraint. One push too many and a quick 'Restore' is in order.

Except for a few high-tension scenes (and the game's two arcade sequences, more on which later), one can save the game anywhere, even in flight between two locations. It is advisable to do so (and to do so often) because, unlike some recent games (particularly **Lucasfilm**'s recent games), it is not only possible to *die* in *Heart of China*, but almost impossible *not* to.

Not that any of the puzzles are especially difficult — it is rarely hard to figure out how to correct a mistake — but players *will* make mistakes and death is lurking around every corner, waiting to pounce at Jake's first misstep. This is very much in keeping with the high-adventure genre and adds tension to the game, but players should be warned: when in doubt, save!

This is especially crucial at certain points in the story where an innocent, ignorant act of neglect can lead to a no-win situation several scenes down the line. Most memorable is the problem of the two bags of medicine: after the first few sequences in the game, Jake is in possession of a bag of healing herbs. (The game manual's handy walk-through introduction will take the player through its acquisition.) Chi starts the game with a similar bag of his own. So far so good....

However, when a crash landing in the Himalayas requires one of the boys to go for assistance while the other stays behind to help Kate, the one who stays behind needs *both* bags of medicine. The problem is that from the moment one boards the plane to Nepal until the characters separate, there is never a scene in which it is *possible* to transfer the bag of herbs — all the intermediary scenes only permit conversation, not action. In other words, one has to transfer the bag at some earlier point in the game, when there is no reason to think that it would be more advisable for one character to hold both bags than for each to hold one. There aren't many such traps in the game, but there are a few and players have to be prepared to fall into them.

(There is another troubling point about the Himalayan scene. If Chi has both bags of herbs and feeds them to Kate, Jake manages to find a villager. If Chi does not, Jake drops dead in the snow. Why there should be a connection is unclear. Shouldn't Jake's finding help be independent of whether or not Chi is able to save Kate back at the plane?) There is also an aesthetic reason for copious saves. Dynamix has made real strides toward interactivity in this game, and players who try to make it to the end on one "life" will miss out on any number of Roads Not Taken. Each time the player could have done something differently than he did, the game points this fact out with a "Plot Branch" symbol. Returning to these points after finishing the game gives players a chance to sample variant paths the story might have taken. While there remains a single central plot to

The man with the hat is back.



This time he's in over his head.

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which one has to cleave fairly closely, there are a number of points at which one's choices lead one to different scenes and direct one toward a (slightly) different ending.

There are a variety of immediate endings, of course; one can get shot by a guard, thrown in jail or buried in a snowdrift, for instance. If one survives to the very end, however, there are *still* a variety of endings possible. Which one is actually seen depends on how kind and how canny Jake has been throughout the game. Does Jake end up rich or on the streets? Does he get the girl? If so, do they live well or are they poor? It is all up to the player.

This sort of interactivity is also developed in the game's conversations. Here, the player chooses Jake's responses from menus of three or four possible answers, usually ranging from safe and non-confrontational to dangerous and smart-alecky. There aren't really as many possible conversations as there would appear to be, but the conversation sequences are skillfully constructed to hide the fact that one is always steered toward one or two central lines of discussion.

The result of multiple solutions to puzzles, multiple plot branches and intelligent-seeming conversations (one nice touch being that characters remember how well the player treated them the last time they met) is the feeling that one can determine the course the game takes. This is an illusion, but a very agreeable one, and a player who never goes back to test the various options is missing half the fun.

One further element of the gameplay deserves notice. This is the pair of arcade sequences mentioned above. The first involves driving a getaway tank from Li Deng's fortress to an airfield and the second involves fighting bad guys, hand-to-hand, atop the Orient Express. Both can be skipped by players who prefer their adventure games untainted by action, but both are also simple enough to be won by anyone with a little patience. Controls are rudimentary, difficulty can be lowered or raised and the game offers what seems to be an unlimited number of tries to get each sequence right. What could be more user-friendly?

Art of China

It should be obvious by now that *Heart of China* is not a very hard game, nor a very long one. There is the element of "replayability," but whether one wants to replay a game depends on whether it is enjoyed in the first place. For all its good qualities, *Heart of China* could still be a throwaway game; that it is not is a credit to the stunning work that makes each of the game's elements shine.

The music is excellent — this is noted above, but it cannot be stressed enough. From the opening screen, the music immediately and firmly plants the player in the world of the game. Like story and setting, there is nothing very Chinese about the music, but it doesn't matter. The people this reviewer played the game with whistled the music weeks after finishing the adventure. Next thing you know, these games will have their own hit parade.

Not only is the music good, but it is always there, underscoring every scene in the game, offering different music to suit different locales and moods. In addition to the music, there are constant, realistic sound effects to reflect one's actions. These are not sporadic additions, sprinkled into the game like powdered sugar on a cake — they are a substantial and integral part of the game experience. *Heart of China* is one of the few games that really use their soundtracks to full effect and, frankly, the effect is quite powerful. It is hard to imagine even the CD-ROM version of the game adding much in this area (except for spoken text, of course).

The art is all digitized, either from painted backgrounds or from live performers. Both sources are well chosen. Though Andrew DeRycke, who plays Jake, is so typical an adventure hero that he is a walking (and running and leaping) cliche, the other actors bring delicious individuality to their roles. A personal favorite is Demetri Liontos as the corrupt, cringing despot of Kathmandu, but all the actors do a fine job of keeping the fiction aloft. (Fred Ikeda brings a Jabba the Hutt quality to master villain Li Deng that is really something to see; and no one will want to miss the harem in Istanbul.)

Animation is at a premium, alas — one gets screen effects that fake animation (pans, zooms, lateral movement of large portions of an image) more often than one gets the real thing — but when the real animation comes, it is well done and its effect is maximized. Master Wu's herb shop is basically a still picture, for instance, but the animation of her hand grinding herbs and handing out parcels gives the impression that the whole screen is alive.

The final element of the game's artistry, and perhaps the most important, is the scripting. Here, too, *Heart of China* shines. The dialogue is clever and, sometimes, funny enough to make one laugh out loud with much of the snap of good movie banter. It never descends to the unfortunate excesses and desperate wit of the game's documentation ("The Dink called Wallace Michael of the popular news radio show, Tick, Tick, Tick."), and only occasionally to coercive sentimentality.

The story's plotting is top-notch, the puzzles are quite clever and the character development that gets squeezed in between bouts of action is credible. It is a pity that some of the most entertaining conversational gambits are ones guaranteed to win Jake a punch in the nose, but heck, that's the way it is in life, too. The story lacks the impact of, say, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, with its global consequences, but it is certainly on par with a movie such as Tom Selleck's *High Road to China*, which in all other respects is much this game's inferior.

If there is any weakness in the scripting, it is a minor one: that the writers were unable to resist making meta-jokes that break the fiction, such as when they lift a line and a situation from *Raiders* ("Why'd it have to be snakes?") or when they allow Jake to acknowledge that he is a character in a game. This sort of gag was acceptable in the old days, and may still work in a *Space Quest* or *Leisure Suit Larry* game, but in *Heart of China* it just disrupts the fabric of game-reality that is otherwise woven so finely. As Confucius *did* say, "He who works on a single thread destroys the entire fabric." It makes no sense to insert jokes if the cost is the player's suspension of disbelief.

Heart to Heart

Although lacking some of the astonishing effects of *Space Quest IV* or the scope of an old Infocom game, *Heart of China* offers a cinematic experience to be savored. It is a successful entertainment, a challenging diversion and particularly a joy to watch and to listen to. As good as *Rise of the Dragon* was, *Heart of China* is better; and I, for one, would not be at all averse to seeing further episodes in the Adventures of Jake Masters. **cgw**

C*R*P*G*S

Computer Role-Playing Game Survey

by Scorpia



When *CGW* asked me to do a survey of computer role-playing games, it seemed a massive task. There were so *many* of them! Or were there? I started a list, which went quickly at first. *Wizardry*, *Ultima*, *Bard's Tale*, *Might & Magic*, the Gold Box series, *Alternate Reality*, *Wasteland*, ummm... *Elvira*... *Hard Nova*... ahh... hmmm... it's getting tougher... quick, Scorp, the archives!

As it turned out, there weren't as many as I had expected. It may not seem that way, but it's true. Once the list was fully compiled, it presented an interesting picture. There was a small cluster of CRPGs at the dawn of the micro age (roughly 1978-82). Then, aside from the occasional release of a new *Wizardry* or *Ultima*, there was a long dry spell that didn't end until about 1986.

That year marked the turning point in the CRPG market, as suddenly publishers were rushing to get such games out the door. The pace has been accelerating since then, with more of this genre appearing each year (1990 was a banner year, with the most new releases). That's why it seems that CRPGs are all over the place; it's a fairly recent phenomenon that more or less burst on the computer game scene.

The compendium that follows is not all-inclusive. It would be nice if I had (and had room for) an Amiga, Atari ST, and Mac in addition to my old Apple and IBM-compatible. Unfortunately, that's not the case. I can only talk about games I've played. So, for example, *Dungeon Master* is conspicuously absent from the list; it seems to be out for every computer except the ones I have.

Since such an overview can cover games only briefly, I have included the issue (by number and cover date) in which the particular CRPG was covered, either as a review or as a "Tale." In some cases, the game was not reviewed by me (hey, I can't have a monopoly on all the action!); these are marked by an asterisk.

Finally, a word about Foozle. This is my generic term for the Ultimate Bad Guy (or Gal) who is behind all the trouble. Invariably, Foozle is either an evil wizard or demon who has unleashed the ravening hordes of monsters that are making everyone's life difficult. Games that feature a Foozle almost always have a big battle with him (or her) as the major goal of the game. These days, there is a slight trend away from "Kill Foozle" endings, but most CRPGs still include it as the "big moment".

Alternate Reality: The City
Datasoft
Review: #32 (November, 1986)

First of a proposed multi-game adventure, *AR: The City* was a fascinating premise that turned out rather poorly, especially in the 8-bit versions. There was literally nothing to do beyond mapping out the city and building up your character for the next scenario. Of course, much was meant to open up to you as later scenarios arrived, but the total lack of any true goal turned what could have been a really involving CRPG into a tedious exercise in hack and slash. A game for those with great persistence and patience.

Alternate Reality: The Dungeon
Datasoft
Review: #44 (February, 1988)

Second and last in the series, *AR: The Dungeon* was a slight improvement, with several little quests to be completed, assigned by an Oracle. However, the design was very loose, and you could stumble on quests without having been told of them by the Oracle at all. A Devourer that showed up to steal items when your inventory became too large did nothing to improve matters. Although there was a bigger area to explore, emphasis in the game remained primarily on fighting. Better than the first game, but not by much.

Ancient Land Of Ys
Falcom

Japanese import converted from game machine to computer. Nintendo-style combat and graphics. A fairly simple entry with a few puzzles to solve. Several tough battles with major monsters (called "bosses" in the idiom of arcade gamers), otherwise pretty much a romp. Interesting mainly for seeing what the Japanese do in terms of lightweight CRPGs.

Bard's Tale I
Interplay
Review: 5.5 (November-December, 1985)

The initial game of the series is a combination of puzzle-solving and hack'n'slash set up in a very linear approach. Dungeons must be done in strict order for successful completion. Getting started can be extremely difficult, and the game can be saved only in one place, making for a certain amount



Buck Rogers

of aggravation. However, it does have many points of interest, particularly in the puzzles, and is definitely a game worth getting.

Bard's Tale II
Interplay
Review: #38 (June-July, 1987)

Without a doubt, the worst of the series. Combat reaches excessive and ludicrous proportions, while the Death Snares are nothing more than monotonous run-arounds designed to frustrate and aggravate the player. The "big battle" is a farce, with Foozle going down pretty quickly, but his guards taking many rounds to dispose of. Boring and pointless about sums up this one.

Bard's Tale III
Interplay
Review: #48 (June, 1988)

The series redeemed itself with the third installment, flawed though it was by several seams in the game. Basically a sequence of mini-quests, with the party visiting various lands and times to acquire a variety of special magical items. All of this, of course, is the prelude to the usual "ultimate combat" at the end, which, unfortunately, is again rather a letdown. The best parts are the quests themselves, which have a slight "adventure game" feel to them, as the use of different objects is often necessary to accomplish one's goal. Still too oriented towards the "hordes of monsters" approach to combat, along with spells of absurd power, but otherwise worth playing.

Beyond Zork
Infocom
Review: #42 (December, 1987)

Infocom's only entry in the hybrid game approach, its merging of CRPG with adventure does not mix as well as it should. Combat in particular is more a matter of getting the "lucky hit" rather than damaging an opponent sufficiently over time to kill it. The adventure portion is, of course, much better, as you would naturally expect from a company famous for their adventure games. So this one is really an adventure game with some CRPG features rather than a true hybrid.

Buck Rogers
SSI
Review: #78 (January, 1991)

A surprisingly enjoyable little game, using the *AD&D* Gold Box engine with the addition of character skills. Typical plot of stopping the bad guys, but the atmosphere of the old serials is re-created quite well. Side bits connected to the main story add a lot to the game; everything is related, one way or another. Essentially a quick-playing game, but fun nonetheless.

Champions of Krynn
SSI
Review: #70 (April, 1990)

First in the "Dragonlance" series, a slight variant of standard *AD&D*, primarily in the handling of magic. Go forth and beat up on dragons and dragonmen (as well as other critters) to stop the evil Myrtani from corrupting the eggs of good dragons. Standard fare for the most part, although the final battle with Myrtani is wearisome rather than exciting. Cameo appearances by some of the characters from the books is a nice touch.

Curse of the Azure Bonds
SSI
Review: #63 (September, 1989)

Sequel to *Pool of Radiance*, with a bit more plot. Characters must rid themselves of five blue tattoos that put them under the control of evil forces. Improved combat with fewer opponents per fight; no more hordes of critters to slow things down. More linear than the previous game. Some interesting side bits, especially with the Rakshasa. For all that, it's still mainly hack'n'slash leading up to the usual "Kill Foozle" ending.

Dark Heart of Uukrul
Broderbund
Review: #67 (January 1990)

A standard dungeon-delving expedition with some interesting points, not least of which is the best auto-mapping feature in any game to date. Combat is better balanced, for the most part, than in many



Death Knights of Krynn

CRPGs of this type. Solving puzzles becomes important in the latter half of the game, so this one is *not* for those seeking only hack-and-slash entertainment. Has an unusual ending for a CRPG (play it and find out).

Death Knights of Krynn
SSI
Review: #84 (July, 1991)

Sequel to *Champions of Krynn*. This time it's Lord Soth and his endless undead legions of all varieties that are causing trouble. Quite linear; getting to Soth is a step-by-step process that needs to be followed carefully. However, you can take time out to wander the countryside for interim adventures as the fancy takes you. The showdown with Soth is standard stuff. Afterwards, two special areas open up for additional adventuring and goody-grabbing. All in all, though, it's mainly just another chop-'em-up.

Deathlord
Electronic Arts
Review: #46 (April, 1988)

Poorly designed, poorly implemented mishmash with a quasi-*Ultima* look. Everything that could be taken from other CRPGs was thrown in with little coherence, covered over with pseudo-Orientalism, and developed into an extremely pointless game. Deficient manual makes it worse. Definitely one to avoid.

Demon's Winter
SSI
Review: #53 (November, 1988)

Follow-up to *Shard of Spring*, pretty much in the same style, but with an expanded engine. The world is larger, with more to do, and dungeons now require some puzzle-solving, but clues and directions on where to go or what to do are scarce. Many improvements over the previous game, and an interesting plot, although combat is not as balanced as it could be. The demon of the title is the main foe, but the ending does not rely on the usual "Kill Foozle" battle, which is refreshing.

Don't Go Alone
Accolade
Review: #65 (November, 1989)

Boring trek through a haunted house. Simplistic puzzles at best, when there are any. Ill-described character classes, some of whose functions are unknown. Magic is performed through the use of chemical formulae, the only point of interest in an otherwise dreary product.

Dragon Wars
Interplay
Review: #66 (December, 1989)

First of a proposed series, *Dragon Wars* has a lot going for it: balanced combat and magic (no mega-death spells), skill use, interesting subplots, and a battle with Foozle that will *not* be of the "ho hum, over in two rounds" variety. The only feature lacking is conversations with NPCs. There isn't much talking to be done here: most information comes (as it did in *Wasteland*) from reading designated paragraphs in a separate booklet. While the game does have a few rough edges, overall it's a good choice when you want something a bit more than a standard slicer/dicer.

Drakkhen
Infogrames

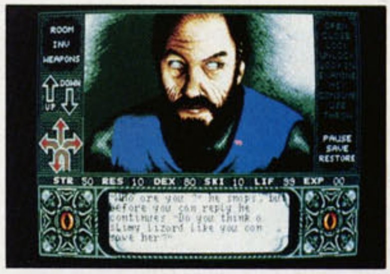
Japanese import with an interesting idea but poor implementation. Take sides in a war among dragonkind that also has profound implications for the human race. Odd combat style allows for little in the way of tactics or even control during fights. Character movement is occasionally awkward with people getting stuck at times behind obstacles, or the party not following the leader through doorways. Sparse documentation does not provide enough information. Terrible character generation system requires creating the party together; one poor set of stats and you may well have to start it all over again. This one is only for the patient.

Elvira
Accolade
Review: #82 (May, 1991)*

Beautifully graphic CRPG with many gory close-ups; not for the squeamish or faint of heart. This is true of combat as well, where much blood goes flying as you fight your way in and around the castle. Plenty of combat, using a variety of weapons and spells (cooked up for you by Elvira herself with ingredients you have to find). Lots to do and explore; this is a tough game and will not be finished in a few sittings. If you don't mind gruesome visuals, it's definitely worth playing.

Eternal Dagger
SSI
Review: #40 (October, 1987)

Sequel to *Wizard's Crown*, using pretty much the same engine, with a few enhancements and minor changes. Not as good as the previous game: *Dagger* is too weighted towards magic use in combat, and opponents are far more difficult to dispose of, making for lengthy battle sequences. Fighting in dungeons is especially frustrating. Interesting plot idea, but otherwise this game is only for the patient.



Elvira

Eye of the Beholder
SSI
Review: #83 (June 1991)

First in a new series from SSI, this one features a totally new engine and graphics, based on the *Dungeon Master* model. Excellent visuals and use of sounds to create a "you are in a dungeon" feeling. Emphasis is on puzzles over combat, a big departure from the Gold Box series. The combat portion, however, needs work, as controlling up to six characters during real-time fighting becomes unwieldy at times. Nonetheless, an impressive first effort that bodes well for the future.

Fountain of Dreams
Electronic Arts
Review: #78 (January, 1991)

Horrid post-nuke loser with a quasi-*Wasteland* interface. Inane plot, ridiculous combat, terrible ending. Not worth anyone's time or money.

Hard Nova
Electronic Arts
Review: #81 (April, 1991)

Science fiction CRPG using an improved variation of the *Sentinel Worlds* engine. Indoor locations are now fully graphic and movement is no longer a tedious business. Take on mercenary jobs for the Starkillers; recruit a variety of NPCs along the way. Good plotline with an interesting ending, allowing for two different ways of handling the main problem. Plenty of combat (which is well-balanced), with little of it random, except in space. Definitely worth your attention if you like space games.

Knights of Legend
Origin
Playing Tips: #69 (March, 1990)

Tactical wargaming with a thin veneer of role-playing. Well-done backgrounds and NPCs are buried by the weight of incessant combat: twenty quests, all in the same mold (bring back an item stolen by some type of creature), tend to become tedious after awhile. The game emphasizes battle techniques over all else. Only wargamers or devoted hack'n'slashers are likely to enjoy this one.

Legacy of the Ancients
SSI
Review: CGW #43 (January, 1988)

CRPG in the *Questron* style, with many similarities. Not surprising, as it was done by the same people. The only novelty is the museum with exhibits you enter by depositing the proper coins. Plot is almost identical to that of *Questron II*: destroying a scroll of evil spells. Primarily a hack'n'slash epic of moderate interest.

Legend of Faerghail
Rainbow Arts
Review: #79 (February, 1991)*

German import that should never have crossed the Atlantic. Poorly translated manual has several mistakes. Graphics are ugly to tolerable. Combat is absurd: characters in the rear rank can be hit by opponents nowhere near them (opponents that do *not* use missile weapons). There is nothing new or of interest in the game; a mediocre effort at best (the *CGW* review presents a quite different picture of this game and makes me wonder if we were looking at the same product).

The Lord of the Rings
Interplay
Review: #81 (April, 1991)*

Probably the best so far of the Tolkien adaptations, though not without weak points. Follows the first book (*The Fellowship of the Ring*) fairly closely in its main aspects, but also has a lot of side stuff added. The terrain covers a *huge* area, and walking around can be a bit much at times — especially as many things can be found only by stepping on the right spot, which makes for a lot of hoofing. Since new material has been added to round out the game (this being only the first of three parts), those familiar with the original story

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Actual screen shown.

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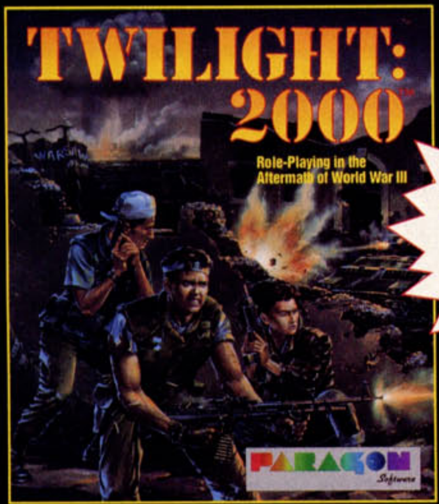
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may find themselves a little bewildered now and then. It is best to go through *LOTR* slowly and carefully; this is a big game and will not be completed quickly, however well you may know your Tolkien.

Magic Candle I
Mindcraft Software
Review: #58 (April, 1989)

CRPG in the late *Ultima* style, with much trekking around and gathering of information, as well as multiple mini-quests to perform. No endless stream of monsters or extraneous combats; this is *not* a hack'n'slash game. Careful note-taking is a must. Superior non-violent ending; one of the few CRPGs that does not depend on "Kill Foozle" for the denouement. *CGW*'s Computer Role-Playing Game of the Year for 1989, and deservedly so.

Martian Dreams
Origin
Review: #86 (September, 1991)

Second in the "Worlds of Ultima" series, using the same engine as *Ultima VI*. Visit Mars in the 1890s. Nice re-creation of Victorian science fiction, with an interesting story line. However, this is more an adventure game than a role-playing game, as character stats have relatively little importance in accomplishing the mission. Overmuch walking about and backtracking, with no means of easy travel, is a weak point. Game demands patience and careful attention to detail, but is otherwise enjoyable.

Megatraveller I
Paragon
Review: #76 (November, 1990)*

This computerized version of the popular *Megatraveller* role-playing game comes off rather poorly. Its most serious flaw is the atrocious combat system, which makes fighting an experience of excruciating frustration. Much time must be spent in earning money to get on with the game. Nowhere near as good as it should have been. Only for the devoted *Megatraveller* fan with a high tolerance for exasperation.

Might & Magic I
New World Computing
Review: #36 (April, 1987)

Extensive CRPG, rivaling (possibly even surpassing) the *Ultima* series in the size of its world. Map-making is a must; expect to have 50+ by the time you're finished. Plenty to do besides cartography and exploration, with many mini-quests to complete and puzzles to solve. One of the few in this genre that has a nonviolent ending. Biggest difficulty is getting started, as combat in the early stages is unbalanced. However, it's well worth the effort.

Might & Magic II
New World Computing
Review: #57 (March, 1989)

Not as good as the previous game on



Eye of the Beholder

many counts. Worse is the excessiveness of the combat, which turns this one into a "Monty Haul/Monster Mash" extravaganza. Weak plot padded with many extraneous activities, leading to a "kill Foozle" encounter, followed by a real-time solve-the-cryptogram finale. Graphics are much better, and the party can be filled out with various hirelings, but overall, this one is only for the devoted hack-and-slash crowd.

Phantasie I
SSI
Tale: 5.4 (September-October, 1985)

A surprisingly good little game, with many interesting features: auto-mapped dungeons, multiple parties (only one at a time can be out), dropping off of characters in different towns, and monsters that can (sometimes) be bribed to leave you alone. Combat is a little weak, as party members are strung out across the bottom of the combat screen when fighting begins, but this is not too serious a drawback most of the time. Standard "Kill Foozle" ending, but he is tough to defeat.

Phantasie II
SSI
Review: #30 (August, 1986)

Tough follow-up to the first game. Almost exactly alike in terms of engine and interface; the same manual is used for both I & II (with a card to detail the few differences, which are very minor). The world is smaller, but the monsters are nastier, so getting through this one will be hard slogging. Also, this isn't exactly a "Kill Foozle" epic, and the rewards afterward are fun and better than in many games of this type. A good sequel to the previous game.

Phantasie III
SSI
Review: #38 (August-September, 1987)

This one closes out the trilogy, and is by far the weakest in the series, even with the changes to the basic engine. For one thing, it is quite short, and players may be astonished at how quickly they reach the typical "Kill Foozle" endgame. Fewer dungeons to visit, so the world seems smaller. Monsters, of course, are even nastier than before, but the game can be finished with characters of lower level than usual. Still, the final battle is a toughie, and the final rewards are very nice, so the conclusion ends up being satisfying, if perhaps a little too brief.

Pool of Radiance
SSI
Review: #49 (December, 1988)*

Initial entry in the Gold Box series; the game that started it all. Multi-quest format, leading up to the standard "Kill Foozle In The Big Battle" ending. Has a more open format than later games. Biggest drawback to this otherwise well-designed slicer/dicer is the inordinate number of creatures to fight as the game progresses. Combats become drawn-out and tiresome, with no way to avoid them or speed up the action. Patience (possibly of Job) required to get through this one.

Prophecy
Review: #59 (May, 1989)*

Another of the Nintendo-style, single-character CRPGs, with a plot heavily borrowed from *Star Wars* (your character is the son of a Jedist, sent into hiding with relatives for safety). Follow a chain of quests that leads to the inevitable "Foozle Fight" at the end. Fast-paced arcade fighting and magic use (your character can use both magic and weapons). A fun one for those who like their action hot and heavy; those who aren't into arcade-type combats, however, may want to avoid this one.

Quest for Glory I: So You Wanna Be a Hero
Sierra On-Line
Tale: #67 (January, 1990)

Cute hybrid of adventure and role-playing; one of the few that are truly replayable. Multiple solutions to many puzzles, depending on character class. Several different quests in the game, but no overall "Kill Foozle" plot, quite a nice change of pace. Great graphics, particularly the animations. Lots of humor. Essentially a beginner's game, but can be enjoyed by all.

Quest for Glory II: Trial by Fire
Sierra On-Line
Tale: #79 (February, 1991)

Second in the series, this one is more structured and linear than its predecessor. Not as replayable, as many events are time-dependent with little to do in between after you've gone through the game once. Slightly harder than the first game, but not by much. Save the home town of the Kattas, and "Kill Foozle" at the end. Each "Foozle" battle is different, depending on character class, with the thief ending being the most

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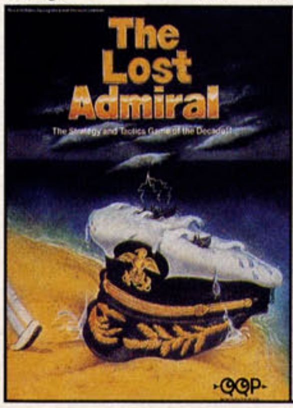
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Ogre $19
Omega $30

IBM ADVENTURE
Castle of Dr Brain $37
Chmbr Sci Mutnt Prstss $15
Circuit's Edge $12
Code Name: Iceman $34
Colonel's Bequest $24
Conquests of Camelot $24

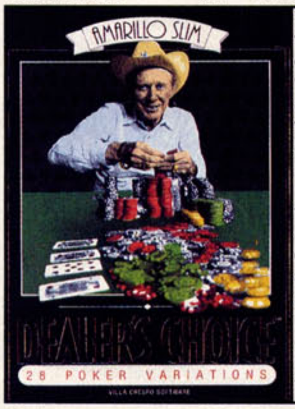


'LOST ADMIRAL' from **QUANTUM QUALITY PRODUCTIONS** is a turn based production naval strategy game. Features 9 sccenarios, a random map scenario, 15 campaign games, flagships with special abilities, strong artificial intelligence, in depth officers ranking system, accumulates your career history as you paly, 2 player option, and sound board support. In short alot like **EMPIRE.** **$36**

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Honeymooners $12
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King's Quest 2 $28
King's Quest 3 $28
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King's Quest 5 ega $34
King's Quest 5 vga $39
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Lane Mastodon $12
Leather Goddesses $12
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Leisure Suit Lrry 1 vga $37
Leisure Suit Lrry 2 $34
Leisure Suit Lrry 3 $34
Leisure Suit Lrry 5 $39
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Campaign $32
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Civil War NINGA $39
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Conflict in Vietnam $12
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Decision at Gettysburg $29
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Fifth Eskadra $36
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German Raider Atlantis $28
Gettysburg:Turning Pnt $37
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Halls of Montezuma $24
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Harpoon Set 2 or 3 $19

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North & South $27
Operation Overlord $36
Pacific Storm Midway $36
Pacific Storm Solomons $36
Panzer Battles $24



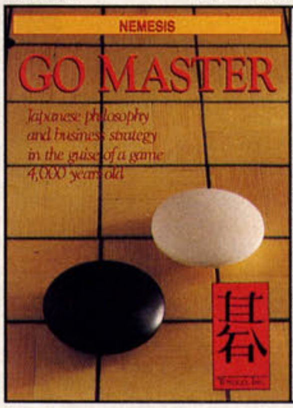
'DEALER'S CHOICE' from **VILLA CRESPO** offers 28 different poker variations, realistic action,comprehensive tutor, & great graphics. Set the personalities of up to seven opponents. **'DEALER'S CHOICE'** features Statistics accumulation, odds displays, easy quick start interface, mouse support. Games include 5, 6, or 7 card Stud, Draw poker, Mexican poker, Forty four & others. **$34**

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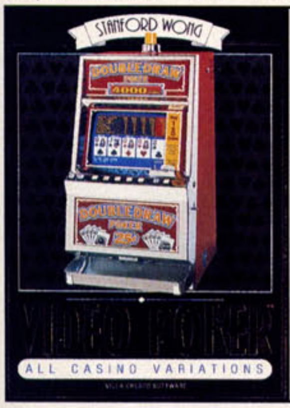
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Crime Does Not Pay $34
Crime Wave $37
Cruise for a Corpse $34
Dark Heart of Uukrul $34
Dark Side $28
David Wolf:Scrt Agnt $15
Die Hard $28



'NEMESIS GO' from **TOYOGO** is the ultimate computer **GO** program. With the simplicity of checkers and the complexity of chess, **GO** is both an enjoyable recreation and a serious strategy game. **GO MASTER** is a basic **GO** player and tutor. **JOSEKI GENIUS** adds complex corner openings. **TACTICAL WIZARD** is the ultimate tutor offering in depth tactical analysis. **GO** is 4000 years old. **$39**

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Duck Tales $28
Earthrise $24
East v West:Berlin '48 $ 9
Eco Quest 1 $37

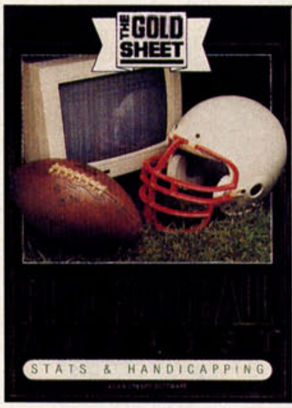
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Secrt Monky Islnd 1vga $38
Secrt Monky Islnd 2 $38
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Space Quest 2 $28
Space Quest 3 $34
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Startrek 25th Aniversry $42
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Street Rod 2 $28
Time Quest $29
Universe 1 $34



'VIDEO POKER' from **VILLA CRESPO** includes all casino variations. It lets you set your bank roll, select a machine, & control payoffs. It features extensive context sensitive help, an in depth tutor for every aspect of the game, 3 levels of sound, realistic cards with optional animation, a machine editor to create your own machines, & 2 player head to head real time competition. **$34**

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Harpoon Editor $27
Harpoon Bundle $54
High Seas $33
In Harms Way $36
Iraq Conflict $12
Kampfgruppe $37

Red Lightning $12
Retrun to the Falklands $28
Rommel at El Alamein $36
Rommel at Gazala $36
Rommel North Africa $24
Rorke's Drift $39
Second Front $37



'PRO FOOTBALL ANALYST' from **VILLA CRESPO** is a statistics handicapping system for the stats oriented fan. Features display of 60 stats by team or category, trend spotting, offensive/dfensive rankings for each stat, unlimited prediction & trend formulas. Includes 2 years stats. Predict game results. Create & print pool entries. Easy stats updates by modem, mail or manually. **$37**

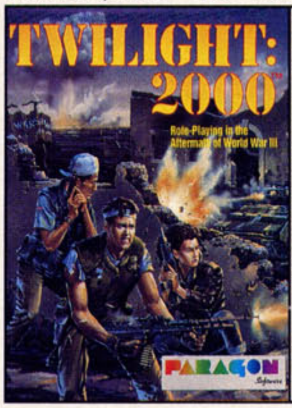
IBM ADVENTURE
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All Dogs Go to Heaven $19
Altered Destiny $34
Arthur Quest Excaliber $12
B.A.T. $32
Black Cauldron $14

Fool's Errand $12
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Gold Rush $14
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Whales $34
Where Amrcas Pst CSD $37
Where Europe CSD $30



'TWILIGHT 2000' from **MICROPROSE** is a roleplaying game set in the aftermath of WW3. Test your leadership skills by commanding a squad of 20. Features individual motivations, values & moral code, 50 attributes/skills, 60 careers, overhead 3D outdoor views, detailed 3D military vehicle simulators, masses of vehicles, weapons, & explosives to kill & maim with. 256 color VGA, adlib support. **$34**

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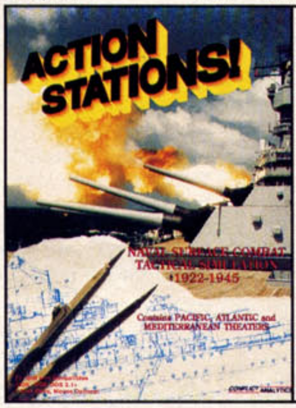


'WORLDS AT WAR' by **Lyric Software** is a game of naval combat on a galactic scale. Simple in concept, you can play the tactical study for an hour; or the campaign game for a weekend. Features include random map generation, hidden movemnet, design your own task forces, capture palnets to build more units. **CGW** said "...like **EMPIRE**, what this game has is play-value". **$30**

GO Tactical Wizard $39
Grand Slam Bridge $24
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Prime Time Hits 2 $25
Puzzle Gallery $26
Puzznic $25
Risk $24
Sargon 4 $34
Scrabble $24
Scrabble Deluxe $34
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'ACTION STATIONS' by **RAW SOFTWARE** is a naval suface combat simulation. This game covers 1922 to 45 in amazing detail. Features 21 status displays, 30 scenarios in the Atlantic, Med and Pacific, subordinate comanders, treatment of smoke, starshells, flares, radar, weather, shore batteries, aircraft spotting & more. Ships are modeled in detail. This is the premier WW2 naval game. **$29**

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Spot $28
Stratego $31
Strip Poker 2 $31
Strip Poker 3 $31
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Links Course 4 $17
Links Course 5 $17
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Madden Football $32
Madden Team Disk 89 $18
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IBM TRADITIONAL

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Vegas Casino 2 $10
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IBM SPORTS

Microleague Baseball 2 $31
Microleague Baseball 3 $34
ML World Series 1950's $17
ML World Series 1960's $17
ML World Series 1970's $17
ML World Series 1980's $17



'MIGHT & MAGIC 3' from **NEW WORLD** is a first person roleplaying game. Explore towns, dungeons, wilderness, & castles. Thousands of animated inhabitants, places & things to discover. Great music, sound fx, & speech add another dimension to game play. Automatic help when your stuck keeps you going in the tuff spots. Features pop up maps, 256 color VGA, & sound board support. **$38**

ML 1982 - 1990 Ea $17
ML All Stars $17
ML Franchise Disks Ea $20
ML Box Score Stats $20
ML GM Disk 3 $25
ML Roster Security $20
Microleague Basketball $28
ML Personal Pro Golf $28
Microleague Football $28
ML Ftball GM/Owners $25
ML Ftball Team Disks $17
Mike Ditka Football $37
MSFL Proleague Ftball $34
MSFL Pro Draft $28
NASCAR Challenge $31
NFL Challenge $60
NFL 1985 - 1987 Ea $15
NFL 1988 - 1990 Ea $22
NFL All Star Teams $22
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NG Course 2 $15
NG Course 1 & 2 $19
NG Course 3 $15
NG Course 4 $15
NG Course 5 $15
Omni Horse Racing $18
Orel Hirshiser's Baseball $28
Pete Rose Baseball $ 9



'MAGIC CANDLE 2' from **MINDCRAFT** is an in depth roleplaying game. The sequel surpasses the original. Features a great story, new magic, new monsters, new skills, new npcs, old friends, optional auto combat, conversation recorder save your conversations to disk, printouts , text searches, automatic mapping, split parties, mouse support, 256 color VGA, sound board support. **$38**

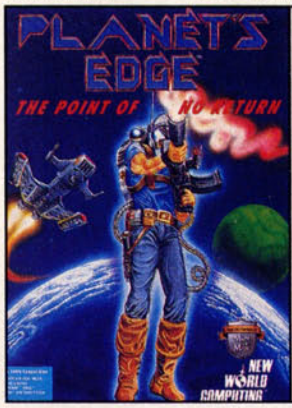
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Weaver Baseball 2.0 $32
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1990 Stats/Mngr Profils $16

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688 Attack Sub $10
Altered Destiny $10
Bard's Tale 1 $10



'PLANET'S EDGE' from **NEW WORLD** is a save the Earth sci fi roleplaying game. Track down a missing Earth & return it to its own place & time. Explore dozens of solar systems featuring unique inhabitants & environments. Design your own space ship. Features puzzles with multiple solutions, 3D perspective, strategy or real time combat, 256 color VGA & sound board support. **$38**

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Buck Rogers $10
Champions of Krynn $10
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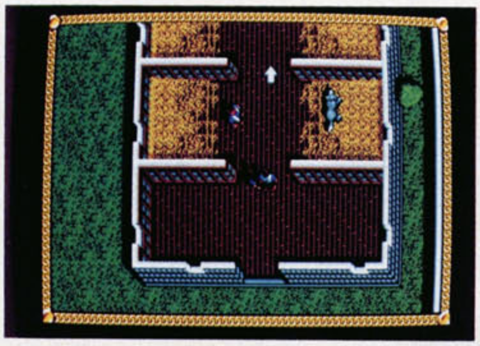
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The Lord of the Rings

difficult and involved. Has one of the best "reward" sequences around.

Questron
SSI
Review: #4.3 (June, 1984)*

Something along the lines of an early-*Ultima* clone (a license had to be obtained from Lord British for this game to be published), but with its own points of interest. Monsters roam the outdoors in specific places and require particular weapons to kill them. Travel is accomplished in a variety of ways, including by ship, llama and giant eagle (the most fun way to get around). Three nasty dungeons to traverse before the big one with Foozle. This one is a bit old, but it still has one of the neatest reward endings in the genre.

Questron II
SSI
Review: #50 (August, 1988)

Reprise of a familiar theme; pretty much the same stuff as the previous game, although somewhat easier. Here you're out to destroy the evil book of magic by going back in time, a plot device rather reminiscent of Mondain and his evil gem in *Ultima I*. Mainly hack'n'slash with some dungeon-delving; no puzzles to speak of. Auto-mapping is available in some dungeons. Overall, not as good as the first *Questron*; this one is a mediocre effort at best.

Realms of Darkness
SSI
Tale: #37 (May, 1987)

CRPG of only moderate interest at best. March through various dungeons on little quests, solving obvious puzzles along the way. Not as well-balanced as it could be in matters of combat. Extremely linear setup, requiring completion of one quest before moving to the next. Overall, a game for beginners more than anything else.

Savage Empire
Origin
Review: #80 (March, 1991)*

First in the Worlds of Ultima series, using the *Ultima VI* engine and graphics. Avatar and friends are pulled by accident into a jungle world and must find a way to get home. This requires uniting a variety of native tribes who are all more or less at war with each other. Like *Martian Dreams*, more oriented towards puzzle than role-playing, although there is a fair amount of combat to be done along the way. Not too difficult, but occasionally tricky. Good for filling in the hours while you wait for the next real *Ultima*.

Scavengers of the Mutant World
Interstel
Review: #59 (May, 1989)

Another post-nuke disaster that should never have seen the light of day. A game with ugly graphics, incredibly awkward interface, killer-dungeon mentality and truckloads of aggravation. Pass it by.

Secret of the Silver Blades
SSI
Review: #75 (October, 1990)

Sequel to *Azure Bonds*. The party is summoned (sans equipment) to help a mining town besieged by monsters in the mines. Of all the Gold Box games, the most combat-intensive and also the most boring. There is virtually nothing to do but kill almost everything in sight. For hard-core slicer/dicers only.

Sentinel Worlds I: Future Magic
Electronic Arts
Review: #54 (December, 1988)

Interesting science-fiction CRPG, once you get past the slow beginning; it takes awhile before the good stuff starts to happen. Good plotline, with several smaller stories inside the large one. Biggest drawbacks to the game are the incredibly tedious indoor movement system, and the terrible ending ("Okay, you won! That's it! Done, over, next.") If you can live with that, this is a good game to play.

Shard of Spring
SSI
Review: #33 (December, 1986)

Typical hack-and-slash romp as your party attempts to retrieve a magical gem (the shard of the title). Ramble across the countryside and through dungeons (most of which are small, except the final one). Numerous battles, leading up to the usual "big confrontation". This one is not bad for its type, and better than some.

Sorcerian
Sierra On-Line

Yet another Japanese import, with an interesting feature or two. Instead of the usual long adventure, this one sports fifteen separate small quests. This allows for a certain amount of variety, and will appeal greatly to those who find the epic-type games too much. The down side is the magic system, which is complex and unique, as spells are not acquired directly by magic users. Potions must be concocted and items enchanted (which takes a *long* time) in order for spells to be cast. Also, the action is arcade in style, which is typical for a Japanese game, and some will find this irksome. On the other hand, this is not just hack-and-slash, as there are puzzles to be solved along the way. The manual is thick, but is skimpy on some important information relating to magic and occupations. Overall, good for a change of pace, if you can stand the arcade "thing" and get the hang of the magic system.

Space: 1889
Paragon
Review: #80 (March, 1991)*

Paragon's attempt to bring this paper RPG to life falls flat on its face. Uninspired graphics, disorganized plot, irksome interface, terrible combat system, and humdrum ending. While not a total disaster, it is likely that only the most hard-core *Space:1889* (paper version) fans will enjoy this.

Times of Lore
Origin
Review: #55 (January, 1989)

A minor CRPG in the Nintendo style, notable mainly for the use of an icon interface and simplicity of play. This one is essentially for the beginning CRPG player, and is in fact a good introduction to the genre if you haven't played anything like this before, or found the more complex games a bit bewildering. Experienced players, however, will find little of interest here.

Tunnels & Trolls: Crusaders of Khazan
New World Computing
Review: #79 (February, 1991)

Perfect example of a good game gone wrong (see the article for details on why that happened). Poor programming and/or playtesting allowed far too many bugs in the game. Very loose design, with little direction for the player on what to do or where to go. Unbalanced combat, especially late in the adventure. Overall, a big disappointment; for the hard-core *T&T* fan only.

2400 A.D.
Origin
Tale: #44 (February, 1988)

Science fiction cartoon pretending to be a real game. Hokey graphics and simplistic play destroy any feeling of excitement or suspense. Shallow, bland, and not particularly imaginative. Good for a summer afternoon or rainy day when you want something that isn't mentally taxing or especially involving.

Ultima I
Origin
Review: #2.1 (January-February, 1982)

This first game in the series is truly epic in scope: aside from a large land (with dungeons) to explore, eras pass from primitive to high-tech, providing ever-better weapons, armor, and transportation. There is even an outer space combat segment! The basic goal is to eventually go back in time and destroy Mondain and his evil gem of power. One of the first games of its time to have a real outdoors; most in the genre were busily pushing you through underground passageways. This game also introduced talking to people to pick up clues, although in a much more rudimentary form than the current Ultimas. Biggest problem in the game (which was not really fixed until IV) is

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the unbalanced combat system. Otherwise, a classic not to be missed.

Ultima II
Origin
Review: 3.2 (March-April, 1983)*

In this game, Lord British began tightening up the design. Here you're after Minax, the protege of Mondain. There is still some flying around in space (which could well have been omitted), and moongates are introduced for the first time, but there is also considerable scaling back in the structure, with a trend towards more plot. Aside from the uneven combat, and the fact that dungeons tend to be extraneous excursions, a good sequel to the original game.

Ultima III
Origin
Review: 3.6 (December 1983)

Best of the first trilogy. Time travel and space stuff have been dropped; the emphasis is on fantasy alone. Plot and structure are more developed. First Ultima to feature party adventuring, with a group of up to four, and a revised combat system with individual depictions of monsters and characters. Destroy Exodus, offspring of Mondain and Minax, in a surprisingly quiet and nonviolent fashion. This marked the turn of the Ultima series away from the standard "Kill Foozle in a Big Battle" ending to resolutions that are less combative in spirit, a trend that has continued through *Ultima VI*.

Ultima IV
Origin
Review: #25 (January-February, 1986)

Still my personal favorite of the series. The only game on the market where personal development of the character, beyond mere fighting skill, is the heart of the plot. This theme makes the game occasionally difficult for those who are only used to the typical slicer/dicer where the sole matter of importance is the body count of monsters.



The Savage Empire

Structure is very tight, but the format is open: this is by no means a linear game, and you have much freedom to roam and explore. Combat is better balanced here than in previous Ultimas, so even the beginning character alone is in no danger of being trounced by over-powerful opponents. A class act throughout.

Ultima V
Origin
Review: #47 (May, 1988)

A more somber theme prevails in this one, with the land of Britannia crushed under laws enforcing pseudo-virtues. Lord British is missing, and the Avatar is called back to set things to rights again. A worthy follow-up to the previous game, although the manual is surprisingly poor, omitting much basic information of importance. The Underworld is likewise a disappointment, being vast but essentially empty, and rather a tedious place to move around in. The structure of the game also seems a bit loose, and there is a slightly unfinished feel to it. For all that, *Ultima V* is the logical continuation of the previous game, with an involving storyline, and is not to be missed.

Ultima VI
Origin
Review: #71 (June, 1990)

The ground-breaker that ushered in a new

era in Ultima graphics, with a world and interface so completely different it comes as a shock to veteran players. The size is single scale, with no more "zoom-ins". Virtually all items are tangible and can be manipulated some way or other. Overall, the real-world feel to this one is astonishing, and takes a little getting used to. This is enhanced further by putting all the monsters in dungeons, so that combats on the surface are few and far between. The plot wraps up the first trilogy, as well as the second, reveals the secret of the Codex of Ultimate Wisdom, and provides some lessons on getting along with those who are different. The weak spot is the middle portion and the hunt for the pirate map, which is more a time-waster than anything else. Regardless, this one is definitely worth your time.

Wasteland
Electronic Arts
Tale: #48 (June, 1988)

Really the only decently-designed post-nuke game on the market. Desert Rangers investigate strange happenings in the deserts of Arizona and discover more than they bargained for. Bang-up ending, although not exactly in the "Kill Foozle" class. Interesting subplots, with multiple solutions to many situations. Emphasis on skills (although this part was not as well thought out as it could have been) as well as stats. Has, perhaps, more combat than is really necessary, but fighting is better balanced generally than in many games of this type. A good one to choose.

Wizardry I: Proving Grounds of the Mad Overlord
Sir-Tech
Review: #2.3 (May-June, 1982)

The original classic, and the first CRPG to give you a full party of individuals to control, instead of the usual single character roaming alone in dangerous places. Also the first to provide for heavy-duty magic use, with reams of spells for mages and priests. Delve into a ten-level dungeon to retrieve Trebor's (the Mad Overlord) amulet that was stolen by Werdna. 3-D point-of-view, with mediocre graphics: walls and floors are line drawings without color or decoration; no visible objects on-screen (stairs, for instance, have to be stepped on to find out they're there); static monster picture (although in full color) during encounters. All-text combat resolution.

Of course, *Wizardry* was never noted for its graphics, but for the quality of its game play. Moving through the dungeon levels was exciting, and occasionally frustrating, thanks to Dark! areas (where no light worked), Fizzle! areas (where no magic worked), spinners, teleporters, pits, and other nasty contrivances, not to mention all manner of hostile critters. This was in addition to the tricks and puzzles, most of which were solved mainly by having the right item equipped, and a host of mysterious magical objects whose uses were determined by trial and error. While mainly hack-and-slash, it's still a grand expedition, even today.

Wizardry II: The Knight of Diamonds
Sir-Tech
Review: #2.4 (July-August, 1982)

Disappointingly weak follow-up. Tiny (comparatively) dungeon with only six levels. Pick up the pieces of the Knight of Diamonds armor that are scattered around through the dungeon. Playing *Wizardry I* first is a necessity, as characters must be imported in from that game. Nothing really new or innovative to be seen here, although the non-Foozle ending is a nice touch; best for the hard-core fan only.

Wizardry III: Legacy of Lyllgamyn
Sir-Tech
Review: #3.6 (December, 1983)*

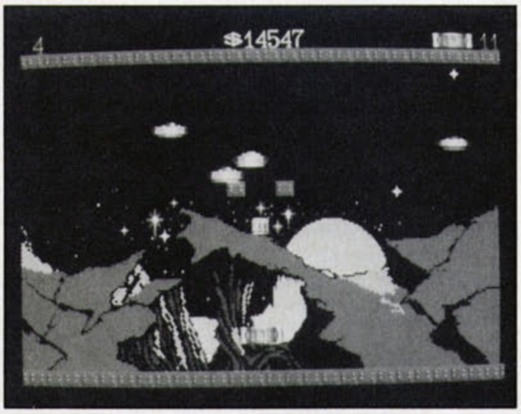
This one is not a true sequel, as you start out with level one characters. Essentially, *Legacy* is *Wizardry I* all over again, with a few bells and whistles added. The object is to obtain the Orb of Lyllgamyn from the

(Continued on page 108)

A Triscuit, a Troika

Three Flavors in Paragon's Puzzle Trio

by Matt Taylor



TITLE:	Troika
SYSTEM:	IBM (with 640K)
# PLAYERS:	1 (or 2 in "Rebel Planets")
PRICE:	$34.95
COPY PROTECT:	Documentation Look-Up
DESIGNER:	Dima Pavlovsky
PUBLISHER:	Paragon Software Greensburg, PA

There are certain advertising practices which are simply, to say the least, disingenuous. One of them is comparing a (Russian-born or otherwise) puzzle game, especially undeservedly, to *Tetris*. The box copy for *Troika* boasts "three times the fun of *Tetris*." *Tetris* was a ground-breaking mind-boggler that spawned scores of sequels, prequels, spin-offs and rip-offs because of its uniquely addictive play. *Troika*, in contrast, offers three different games: "Metal Hearts," "Ivan's Time Machine" and "Rebel Planets." All three fall into the puzzle/action genre, with planning as much as thumb-twitching required for success. The documentation is satisfactory, and even goes so far as to spin some ridiculous background tales. The graphics are functional, as are the PC sounds, but not much more. A mouse is recommended, but not required, for two of the games.

Metal Hearts Can Be Broken

First on the list is "Metal Hearts," a puzzler in the classic *Pipe Dreams* tradition. Inside a block grid are "Metal Hearts," blue and green pipes, which are destroyed by connecting gold pieces of tubing to them and shooting a projectile through the whole shebang. The greens are optional and simply award extra points, but the blues must be shattered in order to advance to the next round.

All plumbers need pipe pieces, and these are to be had from generators which surround the four sides of the grid. Just to give the player a nervous breakdown, it's impossible to know which variety (vertical, horizontal or elbow) will be produced.

Once formed, it travels down its side of the board until the player decides to discharge it into a desired location. The elbows may be rotated once they come to rest.

After a suitable network is assembled, a bomb must be blasted through to demolish it. The destruction procedure is similar, only a different button is pressed to launch a pipe as a projectile instead of as a building block. A limit is placed on how many bombs may be used. If the grid fills up and there's no place left to place a piece, it is automatically used as a projectile, thus hastening one's demise. Mistakes can be eliminated when the occasional destroyer appears, which kills a misplaced piece free of charge. "Metal Hearts" looks similar to other track-laying titles on the surface, but is really a totally original, fast-paced creation.

Smurfed in Time

"Ivan's Time Machine" is similar to a half-dozen (or more) other block pushers which have played across computers and dedicated game machines alike. The main character, Ivan, is drawn to resemble, well, a lovable, fuzzy Smurf. He's trapped in some unknown time and space, and must flee across 100 boards. In each level, he crosses from one end of the room to the exit(s), and deals with the obstacles along the way. Tiles need to be flipped, blocks moved and black holes avoided. With the cash he earns, Ivan can purchase useful items at shops. Each stage is progressively more difficult, and saves are allowed. One annoyance: there is no provision to describe which file is which, so better keep pen and paper handy.

Ivan suffers from several fallacies. First, the objective is to complete all the levels, but there's no way to know how many remain. There are multiple paths, but the option screen map is an incomprehensible collection of Really Big Numbers which communicate diddly-squat. Second, while it's based on a sound concept, there isn't any provoking new material. This lack of "oomph" may lead some to the conclusion that Ivan plays close to a shareware game.

Here We Zap Again

Those who thought they had seen the last of "Space Invaders" need to guess again. "Rebel Planets" bears more than a passing resemblance to those slide-and-shoot coin-ops of yesteryear, including *Gorf* and *Galaga*. As with the other entries in the *Troika* collection, however, there is more here than meets the eye.

Players control a ship and its lone weapon, a small capsule. When weighted by the capsule, the ship dives down, so the capsule must be released before the craft crashes. Once the drone is fired, the ship rebounds and ascends, whereupon it recaptures the capsule and begins the cycle again.

The alien targets aren't specifically hostile (i.e. they don't blast out Hyper-Powered Photon Torpedoes or kamikaze into the player's ship). So, how does one bite the anti-matter? The aforementioned capsule must strike either the topside or underbelly of the alien, or it will be destroyed (and with it the ship). As can be surmised, expert timing is necessary. Once killed, the enemies may release bonus items, including cash, Stoppers (freeze the capsule in mid-air at will), Shifters (alter the flight of the capsule), extra lives and Rockets (fired from a separate installation as supplemental weapons). There are three "rebel planets" to conquer, and a password is awarded after each is completed.

Overall, "Rebel Planets" didn't run shockwaves through this zapmeister or even prove more than mildly engaging. It is a new twist on an old theme, but not much of one. It takes more skill to master this game than it would to accomplish the same level of expertise on a typical console shooter, but it spirals downward into the horrid pit of repetitiveness pretty quickly.

What Good's a Troika?

Although each of the offerings has a certain merit, this reviewer only had eyes for "Metal Hearts." All are structured in a reasonable, user-friendly way, with a save, password or stage select. Yet, one cannot help but think that, even with three games in one, *Troika* may be an interesting product, but it doesn't come close to *Tetris*. **cgw**

The Rumor Bag

by Sal "Shifty" Rizzuto

I tell ya, it's not easy runnin' around the country with a bag over youse head and tryin' ta glean dis rumor and dat rumor from dese or dose circumstantials in which one finds oneself when one is not particularly circumscribed to one's own personal safety. To wit, dis rumor guy was following dis zig-zag pathway tru da terminal at McCarron Field. Da reasons fer dis circumstantial was dat he had grievously offended a particular business type wit da rumors dat dis rumor guy was spreadin' and in da actualities of da situational, was avoidin' a "hit" in da opposite of da intended meaning from whence da computer game industry usually refers to said propositional.

So, I'm tip-toeing past da banks of slot machines in da terminal and wondering why my editor had published my innocent remark dat **RAW Entertainment** was *thinking* about publishing a game called *Warfare* in da magazine's CES report as though it was a done deal. Da magazine is usually so perspicacious in determining da actual situational before going to press, but dis time, da editor messed up and da specialized employees (sometimes ungratuitously referred to as "kneecappers") were attempting to use dis rumor guy's head as da place to plant da exclamation mark when dey say, "Don't do it again!" So, how dey gonna react when dey find out dat the MS-DOS versions of all **RAW**'s wargames were listed as being from da *European* publisher instead of da one in da States.

But I digest... dis rumor guy has either overdosed on Norm Crosby concerts or been reading Robert Asprin's *M.Y.T.H. Inc. in Action* and da Damon Runyonesque speech pattern managed to stick. Of course, speaking of the unbuffered Asprin, did youse know that da first *Ultima* novel, *Forge of Virtue*, was written by da mythmanager's spousal persona, Lynn Abbey? Da Asprin-dispenser says dat dere are gonna be more *Ultima* books and even put Iolo in da latest Myth book.

To make a long story even longer, I make my way past da baggage claim with da fancy screens toutin' da hot shows on da strip (not ta be confused with the strip shows at some of da places what cater to da less perceptible clientele) and on to the cab stand. Just as youse favorite rumor mongrel gets to da cabs, dis cop starts hassling da driver about his hack license. Licenses are strange things, ya know. I heard dat Kesmai's multi-player *MechWarrior* game may get a new attribution due to **Mediagenic** opting not to renew da *BattleTech* license. Dis must be renewal time, 'cause **Interplay** has allowed *Neuromancer* to go out of print rather than to renew da license. Come to cogitate on da propositional, dere is a lotta talk in da industry about **Sierra** showing a concerted interest in da classic **Infocom** games, but we don't know whether dis would be a purchase to remake da games with graphics or a license to republish da games with several games on a disk.

Da cabbie and da cop manage to solve dere problem and I happily hop in da cab, mutterin' something about a cabbie's taxi bein' his castle. So's he hits da brakes and asks me how I know dis tidbit he just heard from an **Interplay** salesman. "What tidbit?" I ask in all innocence.

"You know," he says, "about *Castles 2*."

I was sure da joker was talkin' about the first and second campaign disks da company is about to release. Dere supposed to have new plotlines, new economic features, new combat features and da additional of new graphics. He corrected me, howsomeever, to indicative that he was talking about a completely new product, set in a new geographic locale.



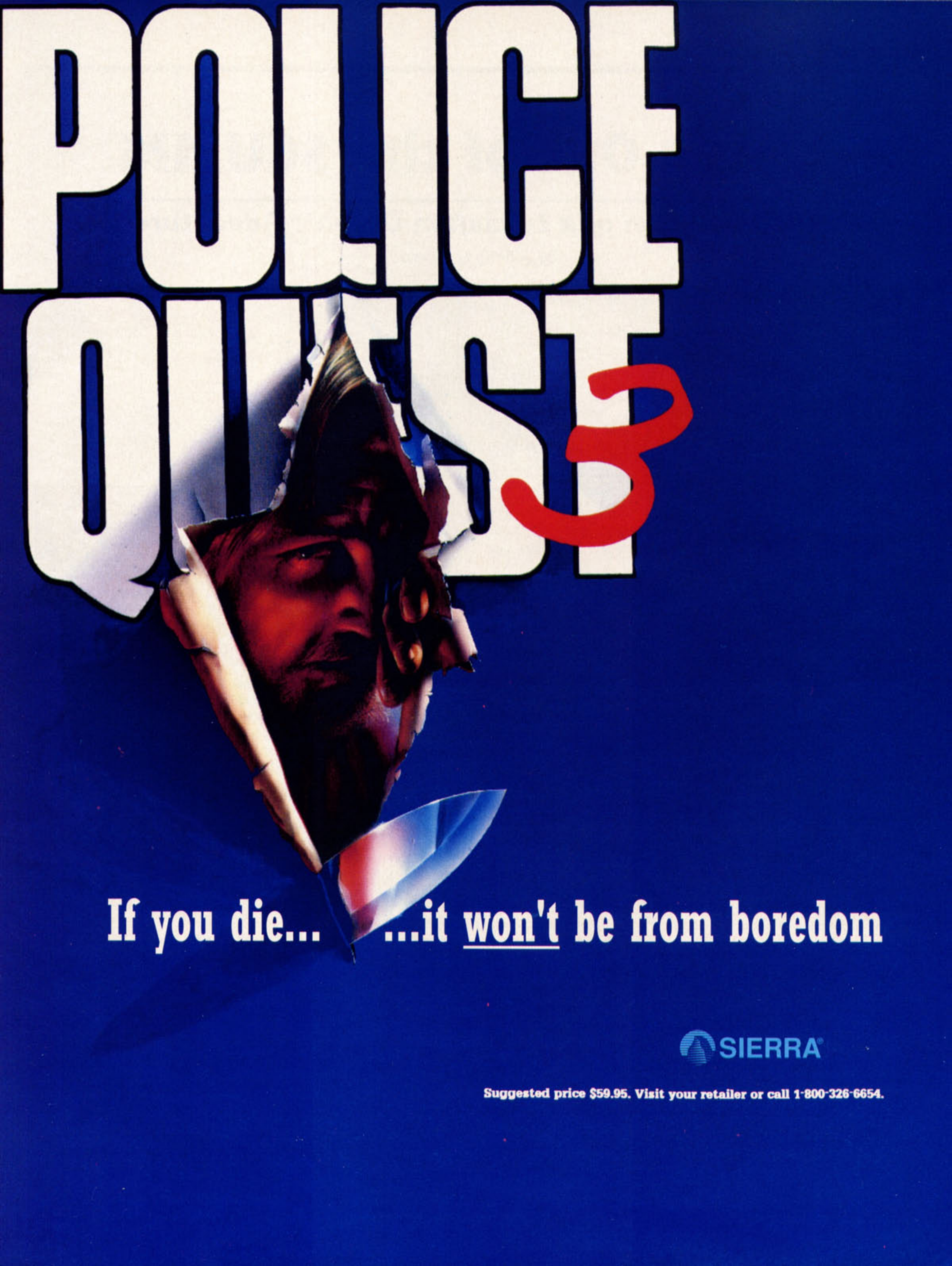
We pulled away from da cab stand and I failed to notice dat my pursuers were entering da cab immediately behind us. My eyes were pulled upward by the whoosh of a low-flying plane and I remembered what I had been told at **Electronic Arts**. It seems dat **EA** is doing a flight simulator for the **Sega** Genesis machine, complete with polygon-filled graphics; HUD with dynamic gauges; red-outs and black-outs; day and night missions; in-air refueling; carrier- and land-based missions and four theaters of war (USA, USSR, Iraq and Korea). Da game's attribution is *F-22*.

I told da cabbie and he turned out to be a veritable sprout of information about computer games. He told me dat **Villa Crespo** and **Ninga** are publishing a combo pack of da Canadian company's *Backgammon* and da U.S. company's older *Poker* and *Blackjack* games.

He even bespoke da fact dat Buzz Aldrin, one and da same with da personage what walked on da moon, is supposed to be doin' a space race simulation for **Interplay**. Da idea of da game is dat da player will make the economic decisions concerning the cold war situational and da play would be integrated with video and audio footage from da era. Da design team is reputed to have ten years of NASA experience.

I happened to look to da rear behind my august personage and spot dat da aforespoken kneecappers in da cab behind me. I told da cabbie dere was an extra C-note if he could lose dose guys and he proceeded to show me da back roads of Vegas like I never knew dey existed. All da while, da cabbie was talking about all da spies what he has conveyed in various and sundry situationals. So, I told him dat Robin Antonick (original designer of *John Madden Football*) was working on a game to be called *Shadow Presidency*, da game of realistic presidential politics where da shadow government may be more real dan da visible one. Antonick is working with a doctoral student in International Policy and Diplomacy what really knows where da bodies are buried. Speaking of where da bodies are buried, dose guys weren't givin' up. (To Be Continued) **cgw**

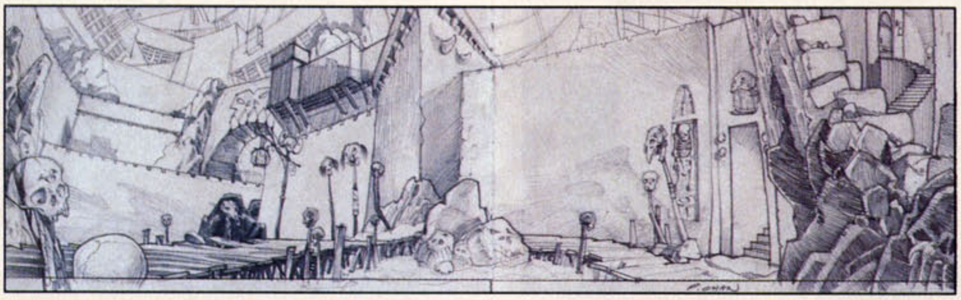
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Rising Out of the SCUMM

The Evolution of a Lucasfilm Graphic Adventure

by Johnny L. Wilson





Something of the distinctive humor associated with the early days at **Lucasfilm Games** may be captured when one realizes that all of their graphic adventures are built from a set of tools named after body fluids. The system is called SCUMM and it is presently in its fifth incarnation, complete with SPUTUM (the interpreter for the language), FLEM (the code used to identify objects and set boundaries where the character can and cannot walk), BILE (the cel-based animation emulator which uses separate boxes to control each body part of a given character) and more. Given the fact that even the software tools used to build the games have such colorful names, *CGW* wondered what the real story might be behind the production of a graphic adventure at Lucasfilm.

Corporal Acknowledgement

Once upon a time, designers only had to convince a couple of persons that a game was worth doing. Now, **Lucasfilm Games** has grown as a division from under 25 employees to over 100 employees and the process is somewhat more rigid. Now, would-be designers (no matter how experienced) must convince a majority of the division's directors that a project is worth doing. They formally present a design document to Howard Phillips (Creative Director). Howard is charged with sharpening the design concept and will probably consult with Noah Falstein (Associate Creative Director) at this stage in the process. Then, knowing how many projects the company can feasibly have on the boards at the same time (sometimes called "slots"), he presents the best options to fill those slots to two other key persons in the company: Lucy Bradshaw and Kelly Flock. Then all three consider the merits of the proposal.

Howard is primarily concerned with the technological and design side; Lucy is primarily charged with targeting resources in terms of logistics (i.e. can the project be done within limitations of budgets, personnel and scheduling) and Kelly is primarily focused on marketing possibilities and positioning. Once this informal triumvirate is convinced of a game's viability, the proposal is taken "upstairs" to Doug Glen (General Manager) and his financial experts. If all systems are still "Go," a schedule is "built" and the full design concept is fleshed out.

Building the schedule and fleshing out the design concept requires recruiting the full team, deciding on rough due-dates and coordinating between artists and scripters. A Lucasfilm team usually consists of one project leader, two to three scripters, three to four artists and two composers. Everyone does not work on the project throughout the entire course of the schedule, so the finished game averages about eight man-years (equivalent to one person working full-time for one year) per product.

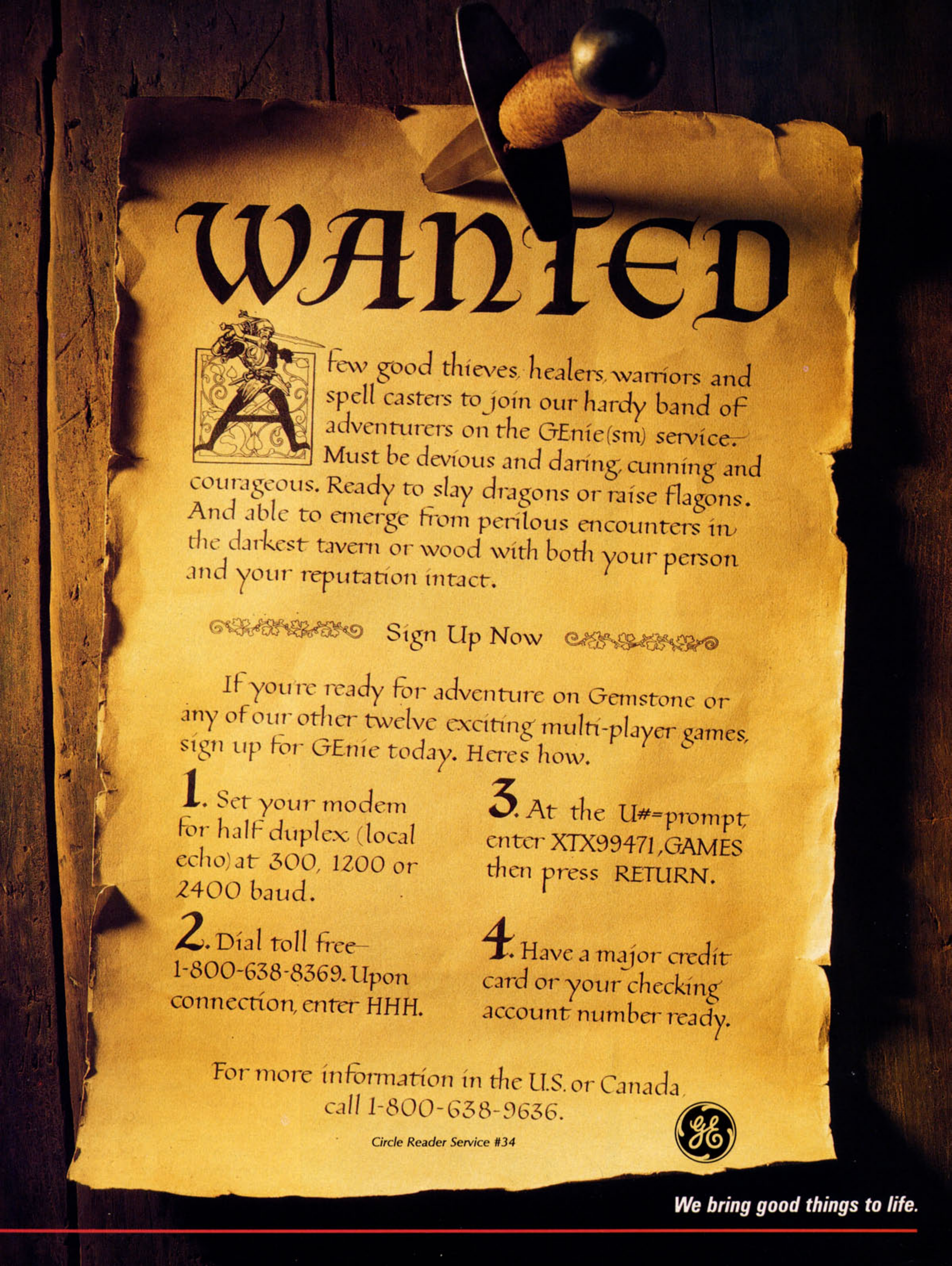
Building the schedule may be somewhat simpler than it sounds, however, since it is based upon rough averages. If a Lucasfilm adventure game is to have 100 locations (called "rooms" in honor of the early history of adventure games), for example, one would schedule one to two days per "room," simply on art.

Pass or Play

Lucasfilm adventure games are developed in three "passes." On the first pass, everything is programmed as quickly as possible. The second pass polishes and "cleans up" the work performed in the initial pass. Finally, the third pass puts in the absolute finishing touches.

On the first pass, the pencil sketches of the room may take as little as an hour and a half to sketch, but by the time they are colored in on the second pass, one may have a full day invested in the work.

Once the pencil sketches are in for the first pass, the scripters (sometimes affectionately known as SCUMMlets) take

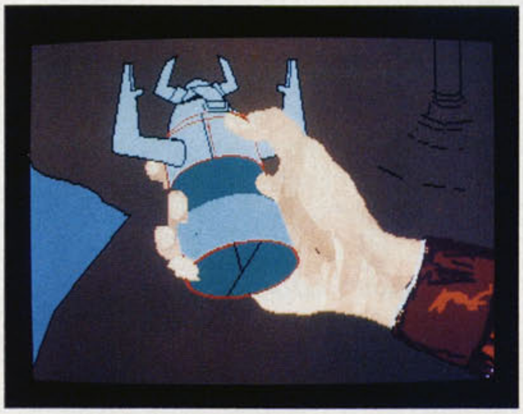

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over and "wire" the rooms. This means determining the boundaries in which the characters can walk, handling the dialogue choices (either with real dialogue or place holders), programming objects (according to one programming team, it takes about nine man-months to program objects in the game, even with object-oriented programming short cuts in the latest version of SCUMM).

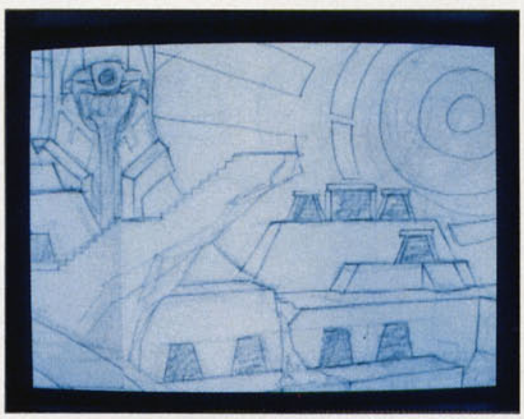
Lucasfilm is currently using two different methods to generate artwork for the games. In *Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis*, the team is using the classic *Deluxe Paint* method of painting the backgrounds and characters on screen with *DPaint*. Even in this method, the first pass looks like pencil sketches and the colors and details are "painted" in at a later date.

In *The Secret of Monkey Island II*, the artists sketch the original backgrounds in pencil. They are scanned into a Sharp Color Scanner in order to bring the picture in digitized form in *Photo Shop* (like *Deluxe Paint*, another industry standard used by virtually every publisher). *Photo Shop* was originally developed by an **Industrial Light & Magic** employee, so it is appropriate that Lucasfilm Games uses the product. *Photo Shop* allows the artists to manipulate the backgrounds and foregrounds in order to give the impression of depth. The digitizing process also seems to soften the lines of the paintings or sketches and give them a pleasant finish. *The Secret of Monkey Island II* also uses a gouache and colored marker finish on the "painted" backgrounds to create its rich, colorful palette.

Secret of Monkey Island II is using *Deluxe Paint Animator* to create the basic characters, since the design team wants that animated style on the project. Artists draw four frames for characters who stand still, but have some "stage business" with their hands. They use a basic eight frame animation for those who walk somewhere and sometimes even more for special case animation (those scenes which only occur once). In the new *Indiana Jones* game, some of the characters have been rotoscoped from video-tape, using a frame grabber in order to "naturalize" the walk. Even in this technology, Noah Falstein says that they have learned lessons about multimedia. "We found that we had a very small window to work from with regard to using natural light. After a certain time of day, the shadows were too conspicuous to let us use the rotoscoping technique. Now we know how movie makers must feel."









To Market, To Market

Once everything is basically in working order for the first pass, the programming team and the artists are starting on the second pass. However, this is really the first time the marketing department really knows for certain what it is dealing with. Some of the in-house employees and their significant others get together for a pizza orgy and play the game in its black and white incarnation (with characters from other games walking through the scenes). The pizza orgy is like a talented focus group and may introduce a few design changes at that time.

When the second pass is complete and the colored backgrounds and some of the animated characters are operational, the marketing department really gets to work. They start to take screen shots, get betas to magazines like *CGW*, prepare trade show demos and prepare for focus group sessions. There is also, usually, a second pizza orgy to celebrate the fact that the product is coming together.

Gamers who complain about package art and early advertising might take note of what happens in which pass. The package cover painting is usually rendered after the marketing department has seen the first pass of the game. The back cover is held until the second pass, to get screen shots as close to the final version as possible. These boxes *must* be printed three to four weeks prior to shipping if the packages are to ship on time.

Advertisements are started at the second pass, as well. They have to be designed and produced even faster, since magazines typically have a three-month lead time in order to get to press before the cover date. Hence, any delays or time changes after the ad schedule is set may force the company to run ads before the product is finished.

Afterthought

When Lucasfilm started the two newest adventure game products, they honestly believed that using the scanning technique would allow them to speed up production. What they have discovered is that it is a mixed blessing. The programmers can get to the first pass easier, but there are trade-offs. The bad news is that Lucasfilm adventure games will still take nearly twelve months from concept to conclusions, but the good news is that Lucasfilm has more adventure games on the drawing boards for next year than ever before. Here's hoping our readers appreciate the process a little better after reading this short synopsis. **CGW**

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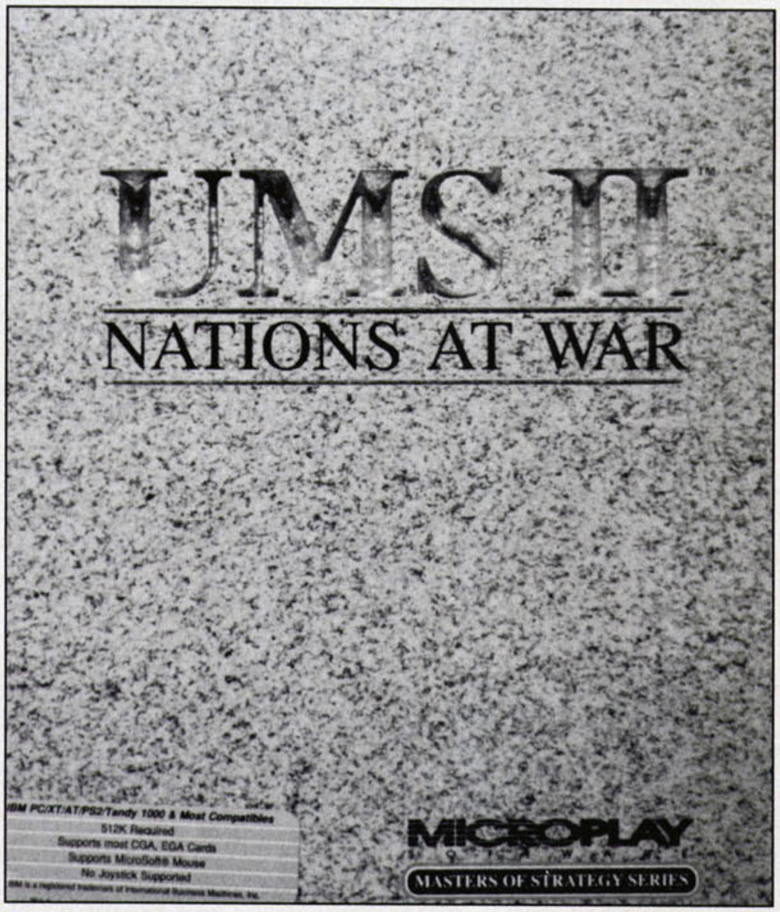
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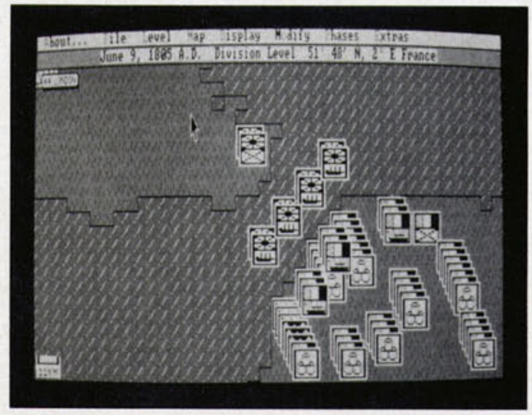
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NAME:	U.M.S. II: Nations at War
SYSTEM:	IBM, Mac
REVIEWED ON:	IBM (386-20)
# PLAYERS:	0 to Multi-Player
COPY PROTECT:	None
PRICE:	$59.95 $29.95 (for Desert Storm scenario disk)
PUBLISHER:	MicroPlay
DESIGNER:	Ezra Sidran

U.M.S. II: Nations at War

by M. Evan Brooks

U.M.S. II: Nations at War is the second generation of designer Ezra Sidran's *Universal Military Simulator* — a wargame design kit and scenario generator for personal computers. With a broader scope than its antecedent, *UMS II* allows both land and naval campaigns. However, due to contractual obligations and publishing deadlines, *UMS II* does not allow one to design his own scenarios. Instead, one must purchase the *UMS II: Planet Editor*, currently in the final stages of production. Thus, *UMS II* is a stand-alone product having three scenarios (the Campaigns of Alexander the Great, the 1805 Campaigns of Napoleon and an introductory scenario of Operation Overlord, the Allied invasion of Normandy during World War II). A separate scenario disk, Desert Storm, covers the recent employment of U.S. and coalition forces against Iraq.

The overarching question is, "Can *UMS II* be all things to all people or, in fact, has the game attempted to cross a bridge too far (pun intended)?" This review seeks to answer that question.

Going by the Book

The documentation is professionally done and somewhat voluminous. Special attention is paid to weather, logistics and national policy (often parameters overlooked in other simulations) as well as the more traditional ground, naval and air movement and combat. Much of the manual is devoted to design mechanics, which is somewhat anomalous given that the scenario generator is not yet available. Indeed, it appears that the manual was printed before the game was published and, in fact, that is true. The distributor, **MicroPlay**, needed the manuals completed by October of 1990, although the game itself was not published until later. Interestingly enough, the game's release occurred in this geographic order: Australia, New Zealand, Germany, Italy, France, the United Kingdom and, finally, the United States.

Much of the manual provides interesting reading — on artificial intelligence, design parameters and the historical scenarios. Sadly, the game mechanics are not as clearly delineated, and the lack of a written tutorial is sadly missed. While the scenarios are interesting in and of themselves, there is a certain unfinished quality to them: objectives are poorly defined, and no ending date is given (Overlord ends on 31 August 1944; Alexander on 30 June 331 BC; Napoleon on 31 August 1805; Desert Storm on 26 February and 1 March 1991). The simulation can be played by multiple players. In fact, most scenarios have more than two entities (Napoleon, 6; Desert Storm, 12; Alexander, 16). Most of these allies have a relatively minor role, but the documentation is silent as to *any* of their roles. While most users would be aware of the roles of Saudi Arabia or France in Desert Storm, how many would have any idea of the role of Malli, the Sacae Minor Kingdoms or the Kingdom of Musicanus in Alexander?

Terrain Camouflage

Graphics are reminiscent of *UMS I*. Units are generally well-defined, and geographic locations easy to see. However, occasional use of glaring reds and blues can make the visual effect somewhat disconcerting. Terrain views can be easily, albeit slowly, changed from seven-mile hex parameters to orbital. Similarly, units may be viewed at division level through corps, army and army groups.

The mapped terrain is a fascinating aspect of programming. However, the orbital view appears to be reminiscent of a "Stupid Computer Tricks" segment one might see on David Letterman, in that the perspective is absolutely useless for anything (except, possibly, impressing one's colleagues with what the program can do). Usually, one will work through the corps level, and drop up or down as the situation demands in terms of strategic and tactical considerations.

Nuts and Bolts

As noted above, the omission of a tutorial is troubling. However, the "Overlord" scenario is a relatively easy one to utilize for comprehension of mechanics. Production, land, sea and air movements can be input by mouse or keyboard. The artificial intelligence may be easily modified in terms of diplomacy, behavior, naval/ground emphasis, strategic posture, objectives, etc.

Units and their subordinate elements are easily accessed, although movement orders can be confusing. Special care must be exercised when the Allied invasion fleet sorties out from Portsmouth; a broad objective may cause the computer to attempt a land crossing by naval elements on a small island peninsula.

Battles may be viewed in depth, with a detailed battle report option. Unit reports may be hard-copied, as well as map locations from different perspectives.

Warning: Writing to disk continually occurs in *UMS II*. Thus, loading and playing a scenario also saves the changes to one's disks or hard drive. One should immediately rename a scenario upon loading so that the original remains available. Alternatively, one can reload from the master disks every time that one wishes to attempt another scenario.

Maneuver

But the critical question is, "How well does the simulation play?" The operative word in *UMS II* is *slooowwwlllyyyy*. This reviewer was unable to fully test out all scenarios because of time constraints. On a 386 20-MHz machine, *UMS II* is very slow. While Overlord is a relatively quick play (one to five hours), the other scenarios take much longer. In a way, this is the perfect family game — one can input his turn, go up for dinner with his family, have a small after-dinner party, and return to the computer relatively confident that his next turn will *almost* be ready to begin.

Certain software experts blame the slowness of execution upon the use of floating-point mathematics; designer Ezra Sidran notes it as a function of how much the computer is attempting to do in terms of mapping, strategy (30% of the source code is based on a heuristic computer AI) and, most of all, on the inherent limitations of the MS-DOS machine. Since an MS-DOS machine can only access 640 kilobytes at a time, Mr. Sidran feels that this accounts for much of the delay, and that execution is faster on the ST, Amiga and Macintosh machines. Whatever the reason, there is no question that *UMS II* is not a quick play.

UMS II was contracted by the UK arm of the publisher. When the domestic parent corporation marketed the product, there seems to have been some dispute between it and the designer. Currently, the latest version is 1.2.6 (dated 5 June 1991) and it runs 40% faster than earlier versions. However, the newest versions are available only from the designer. The distributor contends that the later revisions have not been thoroughly playtested and are subject to crashes. The designer disputes this and makes the latest revisions available to customers who send in their older disks. Whatever the situation and whoever is at fault, the end-user ends up paying the price.

There are some quirks in play. For example, victory conditions are based on outnumbering the enemy force as well as destroying his "national will" (generally by seizing a capital). While *UMS II* allows one to modify victory conditions as well as virtually every other parameter of warfare, a cautious Allied player in Overlord can win by simply sitting in England and building up an army. At the conclusion of the scenario, his forces outnumber the Axis, thereby giving him a "win." Such a result does not unduly alarm this reviewer, since such a strategy is only suitable for REMFs. But what is worrisome is the fact that Paris is the Axis strategic locus. An Allied airborne division using a lightning thrust can often reach this objective within four days following the invasion. Seizure will result in an Axis surrender, notwithstanding the fact that an Allied unit attempting to break out of Normandy without supplies would have quickly been overwhelmed by its inherent lack of logistics.

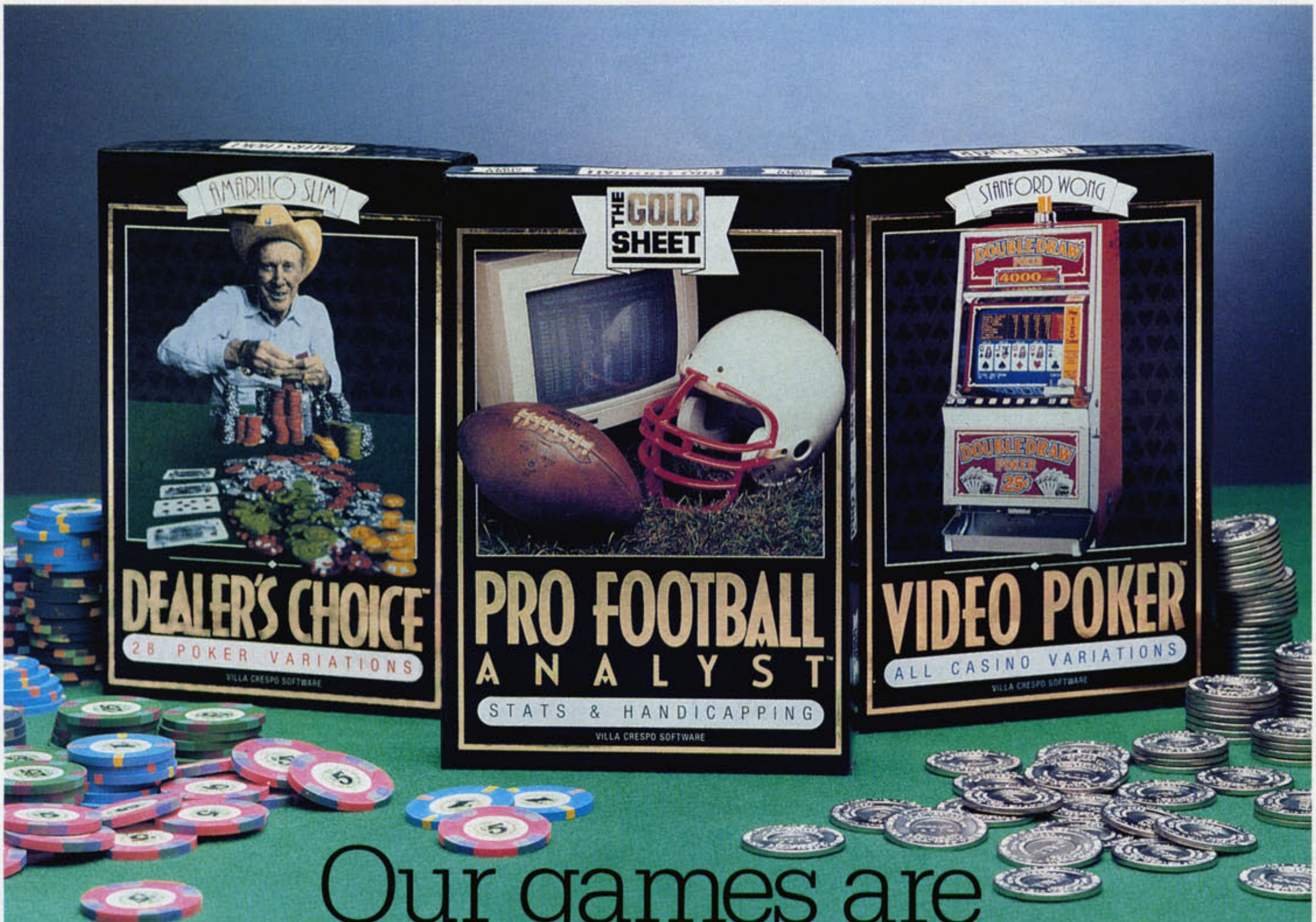
Operation Desert Storm is obviously topical. Having recently returned from Kuwait City and active duty, this reviewer was naturally interested as well. By popular demand, Scud missiles are present and they target military targets. Watching the 1980s version of a V-2 rocket destroy the 24th Mech Infantry Division simply destroys any credibility of simulation. The Scud is a terror weapon, suitable for employment against civilian targets. Its value against military targets is minimal. This reviewer recommends a quick adjustment to the Scud potential, wherein they are eliminated or made combat ineffective. The overall order of battle is adequate given the information available as of the time of design. But overall, Operation Desert Storm does not have a real potential for simulation.

Pass in Review

UMS II is not a design kit; release of the "Planet Editor" will fix this problem, however. An early look at the editor reveals it to be a detailed "paint" program. Assuming that one wishes to do the necessary research to determine an interesting battle, detail in all the geographic and military parameters, then a semi-viable result may ensue. This reviewer feels that the end result may not justify the enormous time and expenditure of effort required.

This simulation won two "Academy of Game Critics" Awards at the 1991 National Wargaming Convention, Origins. Given with tongue in cheek, the garnered trophies were the "Bulk Eraser Award" and the "Most Superfluous Enclosure in a Game Package" (in this case, the disks). This reviewer does not fully concur with these awards. Somewhere, there is a game in *UMS II* — the difficulty lies in ferreting it out.

This reviewer would like to quote from his initial review of *UMS I* (*CGW*, No. 51, September 1988, page 39). "Overall, *UMS* is impressive, but its flaws are apparent.... This first generation simulation is an interesting design; its third or fourth generation descendant may prove essential." *UMS II* is the second generation; this reviewer stands by his original prognostication. CGW



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Sneak Preview – Ultima

Probing the Depths

by Johnny

Ultima



Origin Systems has a "Wall of Fame" along one corridor of their office complex with an amazing variety of letters from *Ultima* players. One letter is a touching plea from a little girl of elementary school age. Having played *Ultima VI*, she asked Lord British to *please* remove the gargoyles because they frightened her. The letter has a particular poignancy because *Ultima VII: The Black Gate* (*U7*) will be even darker and, hopefully, more frightening than *Ultima VI*. The latest chapter in the *Ultima* series *is* not and *cannot* be a product for that innocent child who was so frightened by the gargoyles. This chapter in the saga of fabled Britannia explores the depths of ultimate evil, a subject matter well suited for its "MP-13, for Mature Players" rating.

I've Got a New Altitude

U7 throws readers into the midst of a complex story, an enriched game world and numerous ethical dilemmas. The game is designed so that experienced *Ultima* players can take nothing for granted in the latest installment and novice players can simply leap into the game. The game does not begin with character creation. That would be irrelevant to the story, since 200 years have passed since the last installment. Rather, the player as avatar is drawn into the story from the outset by being challenged by the guardian and thrown into the streets of Trinsic (the initial locale which, of course, is inTrinsic to the overall plot).

On 386 processors and faster, players will experience a full-screen world from the outset. Players still direct their characters from an overhead perspective, but the terrain is *very* different. *U7* is no longer tile-based. Now that the program *requires* a hard drive, the landscape graphics do not have to be stored as efficiently as was once the case.

The world is made up of layers of terrain, programmed so that any locale or object can be at one of sixteen different progressive altitudes. The altitude factor enables the game to offer multi-storied buildings in which characters can actually be seen climbing the different altitude levels to the upper floors. This capacity also makes mountains, hills, swamps and other terrain features function more realistically in the game context.

In addition, all trees, cacti, swamp scum, etc. (carefully rendered by Bob Cook, a true perspective landscape artist hired specifically to give *U7* an incredibly authentic look) are handled as three-dimensional objects, so characters actually move through a three-dimensional world. There are three-dimensional spatial collision routines in operation and the three-dimensional spatial imaging is extremely impressive. Add more than 1,000 operable objects (some of which combine to form *other* operable objects) and one has an extremely convincing world. Herman Miller, an experienced programmer who has not only played all the *Ultimas*, but is credited by Lord British as knowing the world of Britannia as well or better than its "creator" himself, developed the data structures and physical laws to support this sophisticated object-oriented playing environment.

All commands are input via the two mouse buttons available on an IBM mouse. One mouse button represents the on-screen character's feet and the other represents the character's hands. A double-click on the "feet" button will cause the character to find the best path to a desired location on the screen. (Zachary Simpson has done a fabulous job with artificial intelligence routines for "path-finding" optimal routes for the avatar and "follow" code for the rest of the party so that the characters neither play "follow the leader" in a straight line nor wander into dangerous terrain.) A single click on the "feet" button directs the on-screen character to walk a short distance in a straight line (as opposed to "path-finding") and dragging the mouse while holding the "feet" button causes the character to continue walking in the appropriate direction.

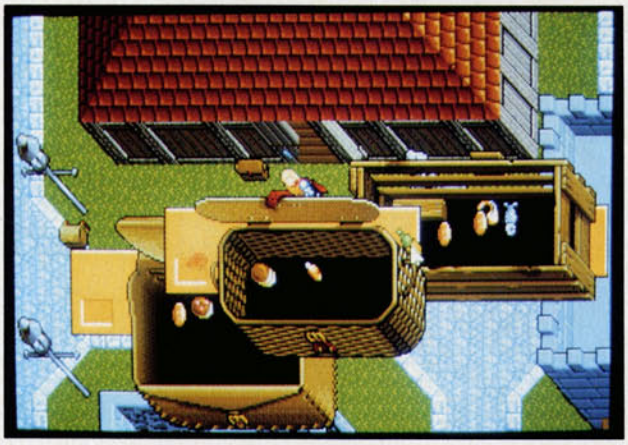
In a similar fashion, double-clicking with the "hand" button allows the on-screen character to "get" an object, while clicking once on the "hand" button allows characters to

VII: The Black Gate

of Ultimate Evil

L. Wilson





"use" an object. Dragging the mouse while holding the "hand" button down enables the character to drag an object from one location to the next.

So the bottom line of the new interface is the fact that the entire game can be presented in "real-time" game time. Off-line activities such as character creation are unnecessary and even non-player characters are programmed for changing jobs/activities on the basis of "real-time" game time rather than the artificial time-lines of *Ultimas* past. Conversations appear much more integral to the game, appearing on-screen without the artificial presence of a text "window." Only the player character's conversational choices pop up in an artificial window. Inventory is handled through a separate system, GUMPS (the acronym for a "customized" windowing system is a parody of the **Steve Jackson Games** acronym for their *Generic Universal Role-Playing System* (*GURPS*). In *Ultima VII*, the GUMPS look like decorative customized boxes, bags, crates and chests. Such object-oriented containers are capable of holding a limited number of items, depending on the characteristics of the items themselves.

The Color of Your Guile

There are also some graphic enhancements that will distinguish *U7* from previous *Ultimas*. Besides being exquisitely rendered under the direction of **Origin** veteran Jeff Dee and his staff, one will notice a depth of extra detail in the animation and portraiture. Former comic artist Glen Johnson (see *CGW* #81, p. 67) has brought incredible monsters to life and is using his vivid imagination to help distinguish *Ultima* monsters from the standard monsters of the CRPG and pen-and-paper role-playing genre. Johnson also draws most of the figures for humans, animals and monsters. Some of his *DPaint* files look like a do-it-yourself computerized "paper doll" set. The team also features hip commercial artist Michael Pierce, a recent addition to the staff who is impressing everyone with his ability to create fascinating faces for the non-player characters.

Add to these touches the extra attention to non-player character animation (each NPC has at least 64 frames of special animation compared to the average game's eight frames of animation), the addition of roofs which are visible whenever characters are outside (and disappear whenever characters enter the buildings) and landscapes with slopes and inclines. This gives one an idea of how much the *look* of *U7* has improved over its predecessors.

The Sounds of Violence

The soundtrack for *U7* is a major project. The *Ultim*ate Bad Guy, the guardian, is played by veteran "bad guy" Bill Johnson. Johnson played "Leatherface" in *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2*, and his character is the only one in *U7* who presents his lines in full audio.

The process is very interesting, as this writer discovered when he taped the lines of "every guard in Britannia" for the CD-ROM version of *Ultima VI*. Martin Galway, audio director at **Origin** and composer himself (many of **Ocean Software**'s scores from a few years back and Chris Roberts' *Times of Lore* soundtrack), explained the process as being a direct-to-disk recording.

Origin's sound studio features absolutely no reverberation, due to the fact it is covered with top-of-the-line professional insulation. The actor speaks his lines into the microphone, and the data is captured in 16-bit form at 32 KHz. It provides a "near-CD" (which is 44.1 KHz) quality, according to Galway and, with some effort, they can even record at CD quality. Right now, however, most of the data is being used as 8-bit **Sound Blaster** data, so recording at higher quality would be superfluous. Martin edits the sound samples to use the most signal available and maximize the headroom. Each line is stored in a separate sound file and implemented later into the game itself.

The use of digitized voice becomes all the more amazing when one considers that it takes 192K for each second of sound. That means less than a minute of full-digitized speech would fill the average 40MB hard drive.

Bill Johnson is not the only horror film veteran working on the *Ultima VII* project. Dana Glover, a former genetics instructor at the University of Southern California, was ghost composer for such films as *Hellraiser*, *Misery*, *The Lost Boys* and *Nightbreed*. Now, Dr. Glover has turned the dark overtones of his undead keyboard toward the *Ultim*ate evil of *U7*. Dana has answered the challenge of computer game scoring beyond the call of duty, but he has also instituted a major change in production schedules at **Origin** for future projects.

For example, Dana scored a marvelous piece which progressively reflects uplift, suspicion, pain, comfort and uplift. The cycle is very important to the plot line and the music effectively conveys the experience. Unfortunately, the original piece has had to be edited down considerably. This is because the current production schedule has music and programming functioning side-by-side. In the future, **Origin** plans to use post-production musical composition, just like it is done in Dana's film experience.

In addition to the score and direct-to-disk voice-over, **Origin**'s Marc Schaefgen has been using *Wing Commander 2* and *Ul-*



Another Eastern block falls.

There's a new 'TRIS on the block. Its name is WORDTRIS. And if you love TETRIS, this latest fast-action, falling block, Soviet game will boggle your mind.

This time the falling pieces are letter blocks. Form them into words and score points. As each block falls, it pushes down the blocks below, producing an ever-changing kaleidoscope of letters where scoring opportunities appear - and vanish - at the blink of an eye.



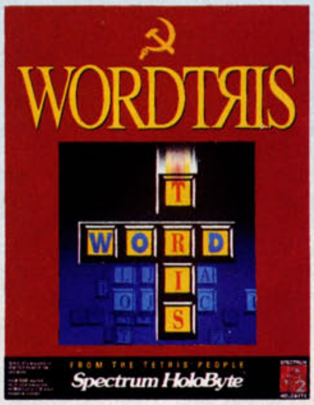
Go for XYLOPHONE if you dare.

Create words horizontally or vertically, but don't put all your E's in one BASKET. Because every time a word lines up, *poof!* those letters disappear, and the blocks below pop up to fill the spaces. So whenever you earn points you stir up the alphabet soup. And suddenly that falling M has no HOME to go to.

WORDTRIS keeps raining vowels and consonants until you've collected enough words to move to the next level, or the well fills up. Of course, each successive round ups the ante as the blocks fall ever faster. But you can choose your difficulty level to match your skills, and select from single player, cooperative, competitive, head-to-head or tournament modes. The built-in 30,000 word dictionary verifies even the most obscure word.

Set the difficulty level at 10 and you'll find WORDTRIS harder to keep up with than the changes in Eastern Europe.

WORDTRIS. Another great game from the TETRIS people.



Available for IBM and Mac/MacII.

Available in retail stores or for Visa/Master Card orders call toll-free,
24 hours a day, 7 days a week: **1-800-695-GAME** (Orders Only)
For technical questions and availabilty call: **1-415-522-1164 (M-F: 9am - 5pm PST)**

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Circle Reader Service #69

ltima VII to build a sound effects tool set that will deliver even more versatile sound effects in the future. Many sound effects in *U7* feature directional cues (wind direction, shoreline, etc.) and two-part time-sensitive sound effects (drawbridge dropping at the player's machine's clock speed, falling objects and others). Nenad Vugrinec, a native Yugoslavian, is also bringing to bear his experience at developing sound effects for animated features.

There's Know Business Like...

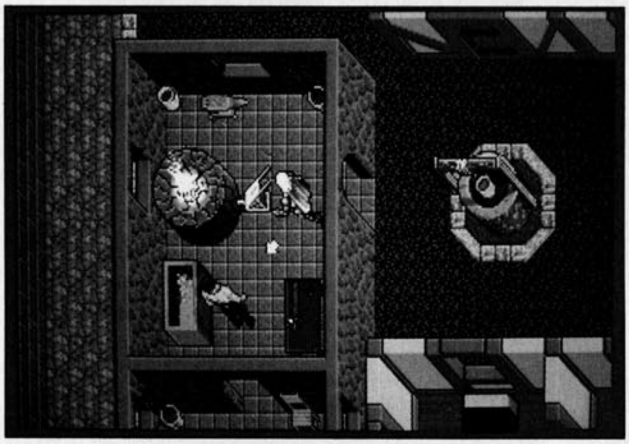
It may be that the most significant difference between *U7* and its predecessors is the way the non-player characters, the remainder of the party and monsters are handled. The bad news is the fact that the player can no longer take control of any member of the party *except* the avatar. The good news is the fact that non-player characters seem *significantly* more intelligent than those of yesteryear.

The reason for the improved intelligence is that a considerable number of man-hours have been invested in the "artificial intelligence" of the non-avatar characters. In the "follow" routine, the party takes a symmetrical shape based on the number of characters in the party. It sorts the party based on a "buddy system" and the routine evaluates obstacles and terrain in order to determine how to move. Basically, the party will squeeze together to avoid non-preferred terrain (like swamps) or obstacles (like walls, rocks, cliffs and slopes) and then return to the symmetrical formation when it is possible. The design team spent three weeks of using pennies and grid paper in order to test out the algorithms for this routine.

Another major "artificial intelligence" routine was developed by Tony Zurovec. Tony has developed combat routines in which each character determines the right approach based on its analysis of the combat situation. At times, the prime directive will be to attack the nearest opponent; at other times, it will decide that it is better to attack the weakest or strongest opponents. If one of the members of the party cries out that he/she needs help or if a member is knocked unconscious, the other members of the party will protect the weaker, injured member of the party. If the AI routine determines that the party has a speed advantage over its opponents, it will perform a flanking maneuver. Also, under certain conditions, the NPCs in the party will go into pure defensive mode or into berserk mode.

One vital mode that is often missing from combat routines in CRPGs is the "Flee" mode. Combat is not always to the death in *Ultima VII*, since a person would have to be crazy to keep thrashing away when escape was possible — discretion and all that.





Since characters who decide to flee are apt to be higher motivated to get away than those inflicting the damage might be to chase them, the possible success of fleeing characters is enhanced by applying a lower movement cost (instead of requiring the same six dexterity points per turn to flee that the program requires for a character to move, it only takes four dexterity points to flee). Also, NPCs know when they are outnumbered and this will often offer motivation to get them to flee.

Another factor that enhances the reality quotient of *U7* is the fact that NPCs and monsters have their own agenda. There are specialized monsters with specific jobs. This helps the player to understand *why* a monster is in a particular locale instead of merely expecting the automatic role-playing assumption that there is always a monster present in a particular locale.

The richness of the towns and villages is increased by what Ken Demarest (the lead programmer who has to make sure all these neat routines and objects fit together properly) and Lord British call "barking." Barking is, like the patter of a carnival pitchman, conversation uninitiated by the player character. Unlike the pitchman's patter, this conversational gambit is *not* directed at the player, but is intended to add atmosphere and offer occasional clues. Indeed, some of the "barking" is keyed to what the avatar has already managed to accomplish in the game.

The Story of Blood

As usual with a sneak preview of an *Ultima*, it is difficult to speak of the story without giving too much away. Suffice it to say that not only has the technology of the game changed, but Britannia is significantly changed in the world of *U7*. Avatarhood is out of fashion, but the player character is still the avatar. No longer is avatarhood "checked" by the program, but there are still those who know of the avatar's past deeds. The trouble is, not very many people believe the player *is* the avatar any more. Why, it is even possible that the avatar could have trouble convincing an artist of one sort or another that he even *looked* like the avatar of legend. Indeed, there might even be someone else *claiming* to be the avatar within the confines of Britannia. Hence, *U7* is not slated to be the kind of game where everyone is instantly aware of the player's reputation or even kindly disposed toward the avatar if they are. Sometimes it is good to be the avatar. At other times, it is an inconvenience.

Then, there is The Guardian. He is a bit of a problem. One automatically assumes that he is evil from the opening set-up. He emphasizes a *new* age of enlightenment and positions himself as the *new* guardian of Britannia. Yet, just when one is ready to write him off as the incorrigible embodiment of *evil*, he warns the avatar of danger around the corner or offers a helpful suggestion. He constantly keeps the player off balance in terms of wondering if this guardian is merely functioning as a "Satan coming as an angel of light" or if there might be some truth in the guardian's position.

Indeed, what is the avatar to do with regard to The Fellowship? It is full of honest and good people who seem genuinely helpful. The druid who created the fellowship was reputed to have done this with Lord British's full knowledge and approval. Their philosophy seems to be positive. The Triad of Inner Strength teaches everyone to:
1) Strive for Unity
2) Trust Thy Brother and to know that
3) Worthiness Precedes Reward.

What could be the downside to such positive teachings? The avatar must decide whether to join such a group or not.

In all, there are twelve subplots within the main plot for *Ultima VII*, twenty different town plots and 256 characters with conversations and dialogue in the game. Has Nicodemas, a mage from previous installments who has now gone crazy, become a menace? Who is this lovely Nastasshia and what is her relation to male avatars? Was the gravedigger of Empath Abbey lifted from Shakespeare? In fact, which of the characters are the thirteen contest winners from the *Ultima VI* contest? It is worth finding out.

(Continued on page 47)

The Hate Canal

by Alan Emrich and Gary E. Smith

TITLE:	Conflict: Middle East
SYSTEM:	IBM
PRICE:	$59.95
COPY PROTECT:	Document Check
DESIGNER:	Norm Koger
PUBLISHER:	SSI Sunnyvale, CA

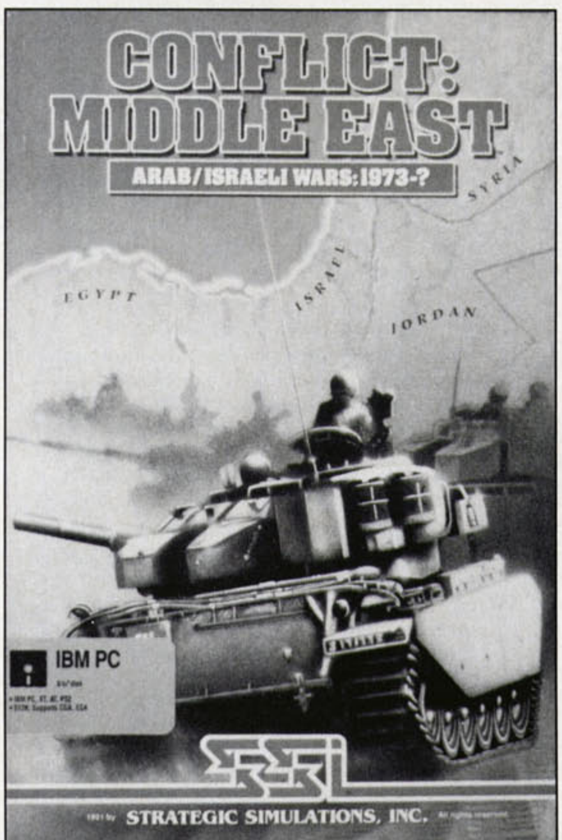
Yom Kippur... the Day of Atonement... the Hebrew High Holy Days.... No moment in modern Israeli history is more remembered than those fateful October days in 1973. As the temples were filling with the faithful, so were the ranks of the IDF (Israeli Defense Forces) as units were mobilized to meet the threat of Egyptian and Syrian armies rolling across the borders. Israel faced yet another hour of possible extinction.

This is the setting for **SSI**'s new computer wargame based on the 1973 Arab-Israeli war, *Conflict: Middle East*. For one to two players (at the same machine; no modem play is provided for), *Conflict: Middle East* either places one in the grim Israeli position of fighting a devastating two-front war or, as the "Overall Arab Commander," one must send large, brittle brigades into the breach. The military challenges presented are formidable for either side. As the Israelis, one must hold narrow fronts to keep Arab forces from flooding into the promised land while, as the Arabs, one must be as the spear, penetrating the Israeli frontier to crush its very nationhood. Here, a true test of generalship can be measured.

Across the Sinai in Less Than 40 Years

Conflict: Middle East is a brigade-level simulation with game turns representing a half-day of action (AM and PM). The game is played on a hex-grid map which covers an area from, basically, Damascus to Cairo (including a portion of western Jordan) at 10 kilometers per hex. This scale really gives a player some perspective on how *small* the state of Israel really is (slightly smaller than the state of New Hampshire). Air assets in the game are operated at an oversized squadron level of five to thirty-two planes per





unit. Airborne assets can be dropped by either side, but weather considerations can effect all aspects of combat, with aircraft the most affected.

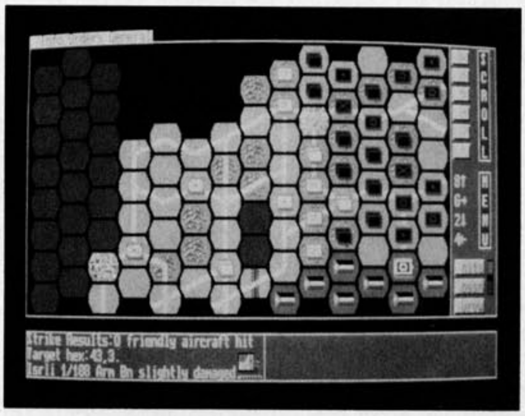
Countless as the Sands

Each army's basic unit of maneuver is the brigade. In the 1973 scenario, for example, Egypt has 63 brigade-type units to Syria's 36 and Israel's 47. Unfortunately for Israel, many of their units are "fort" and "garrison" types, reservists best suited for static warfare. One of the Israeli "aces" up their proverbial sleeve, however, is their rapid mobilization and tactical unit flexibility. The fact that they have some hellacious tank units doesn't hurt, either.

This flexibility is a key element of play in *Conflict: Middle East*. Arab units can be chewed up and spit out like date pits, becoming useless. Israeli units, however, when ground down in battle, can have their various component elements (tank, artillery, infantry, anti-tank, mortars, helicopters, etc.) merged into other formations to recombine into "combat effective" units. Like *Second Front*, the "big units" (brigades in this case) are made up of several smaller formations, with each of these troop types rated for their own unique survivability (defense) and maneuver lethality (offense) ratings.

Conflict: Middle East compares with a couple of previously published games. One is SSI's own *Red Lightning*, from which much of the computer mechanics have been taken (although the addition of mouse support greatly eases use of the interface). In fact, many of the grievances that were hung on *Red Lightning*'s game system were addressed and corrected in *Conflict: Middle East*. Board wargamers from the old school will find comparisons with **Conflict**'s (later **GDW**'s) *Bar Lev* game. With its wild orange-hued hex

grid, the scale and unit density are virtually identical.



"Look! Up in the Sky!"

Airpower, although abstracted, is still handled like the land formations (although rated individually, aircraft perform their functions in squadrons). Though the air operations can be toggled for computer control, players should not have too much trouble managing this rather enjoyable aspect of the campaign. Planes are sent on various missions including interdiction, air superiority, air strikes and close air support. Each has distinct repercussions in the overall war effort in the supplemental role that air power plays. In short, use the planes right and one will more likely win, squander opportunities and risk losing. (Saddam, take note!)

Gaining air superiority, of course, will make future strike and interdiction missions easier. This takes time, something neither player seems to have much of, especially in the very early turns when the Arab opportunity to create a breakthrough is greatest. In the 1973 scenario, the Israeli Air Force is much more capable in night (PM turn) operations. The Arab player is best advised to let his planes "rest" on the ground during these turns (which, remember, are *half* of the game!).

The Arab "equalizer" to the superior Israeli Air Force is their advantage in artillery. There are only five stand-alone Israeli artillery battalions, for instance, to 25 combined Arab artillery regiments. That is a ratio of about 4:1. While the Israelis spread their firepower throughout their formations, the Arabs mass it Soviet-style. This enables the latter to mount punishing barrages in the early stages of the assault in order to create those breakthroughs necessary to the invasion's success. Artillery is handled automatically by the computer for all battles (a real time saver), adding to both the attack and defense factors (as appropriate) for all combat within approximately three hexes of the guns. As Arab tanks and troops get chewed up in battle, their primary hope is that their air cover will keep their artillery protected enough to help press the advantage over the weakened Israeli front lines.

You Want Combined Arms? We Got 'Em...

Aside from the usual tank, infantry and mechanized infantry formations, *Conflict: Middle East* includes several specialized formations for players (particularly those commanding the Arab side) to use. Egyptian commandos, for example, are the only Arab forces that can attack into Suez Canal/Bar Lev hexes. Once they gain such a hex, they will "bridge" them for the remainder of the Egyptian army. (Note: These units draw Israeli fire like a blow-

torch attracts drunken moths!). Also, the more bridges built across the canal, the easier the logistics will be for the Egyptian forces. Egypt also has an amphibious armored unit (PT-76 tanks) for their initial foray across the Suez or upper Red Sea.

In the 1973 scenario, both sides may make a single airdrop per turn of airmobile forces. For the Arab player, this means deciding which front should make an airdrop. The 1990s Nightmare game allows for far more airmobile operations. Warning: SAMs and AAA fire are far more numerous and deadly in the 1990s scenario, too! For either player, additional movement points are expended to enter and leave hexes adjacent to an enemy, as well as to stack with friendly units (congestion becomes a major movement obstacle with a stacking limit of only two per hex). As a point of reference, the Syrian front is only six hexes wide while the Suez Canal line is but fourteen. One doesn't have space to maneuver here and certainly lacks both the time and space necessary to lazily swap brigades around and create the most optimal attack situations. So, just as in real battle, players must get it right the first time and support their main thrusts with all the artillery and airpower possible. Stalemates will be bloody.

Victory points are generated by holding territory. As the Arabs, one must (and that means *must*) get his act together on the first three turns or start ironing the white flag. Sloppy planning will allow killer Israeli tank and mechanized forces to converge, cut off (now, where have we heard that before?) and hammer penetrations. Arab commandos, artillery and tank/mech units must be matched up for the most optimal attacks that can be mustered, or it will be "Goodbye, Tel Aviv; Hello, Cairo."

What's Up, Docs?

SSI is notorious in some circles for their often Spartan, usually cryptic, wargame rules. Celebration is almost in order when one reads the documentation for *Conflict: Middle East*. It scores well in the three Cs for conciseness, completeness and clarity. Further, a game map, several tables and complete orders of battle are included for player reference. More importantly to hardcore players, many of the actual combat formulae are also included in the appendices, as well as explanations on why certain points are handled as they are. Two big "thumbs up" from these reviewers for the documentation!

The Never-Ending Battle

Conflict: Middle East has been expanded to include a contemporary hypothetical "1990s" scenario (which presumes a hostile Egypt). Since this game is played from the purely military standpoint (politics is largely out of the player's hands), this is presented as a straight military study. For diehard wargamers, *Conflict: Middle East* offers a smooth interface, excellent documentation and a tense, challenging situation in the classic "hexagon" ilk.

Documented warfare has gone on in this region for over 4,000 years; *Conflict: Middle East* allows one to explore the more recent battles there and in some highly polished detail. It also offers insight into the great Israeli nightmare "what if" (another war). One can see the effects of that "no land to trade for peace" mentality at the peace conferences making today's headlines.
csw

Ultima VII: The Black Gate

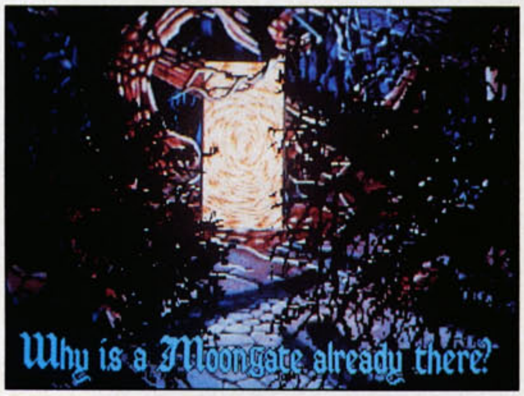
(Continued from page 43)

It seems like nearly every character in *Ultima VII* has experienced some type of personal tragedy or weakness and it seems like nearly every character has been assisted in making an adjustment through the fellowship. What does this mean for the avatar?

Ultima VII may offer an even more important story than the one presented in *Ultima VI*. Raymond Benson, the lead writer on the team, has created a main story that paints the dark side of reality in the most frightening images imaginable. Gamers who experience *Ultima VII* will learn anew the dangers of accepting simple answers at face value and making quick decisions with regard to who is friend or foe. *U7* will unveil some of the helplessness of humanity, as well as some of the strengths of the human spirit. *U7* will underscore the necessity of operating with positive motives and critical thinking.

The writing team does not allow matters to stay in the dark at all times, however. Whether it is the balanced medieval touch of the dialogues (overseen by Beth Miller); the ominous philosophy of Batlin (the druid who founded the fellowship) as it is handled by experienced comics writer Jack Herman (*Elementals*, *Robotech* and *Death's Head*) or the comic relief of Andrew Morris' gravedigger, the story offers plenty of diversion. After all, one would not want to be caught in the "Catch-22" of the main plot all the time and the creative team is very much aware of this fact.





Ultimate?

At one time, this editor wondered how long the *Ultima* series could continue. He was skeptical of the ability of Lord British to start each *Ultima* anew with brand new technology and he was skeptical of the ability of the series to grow in story and characterization. Now the *Ultima* series is being revitalized. The creative team has expanded (it filled up a banquet room in a local Austin eatery during an *Ultima*-team luncheon) and it has brought new potential from the technological toolkit upward through the potential for new stories.

Frankly, if the next *Ultima* team is half as talented and dedicated as the one who has put together *Ultima VII*, this editor wonders if the *Ultima* series will ever die. It *certainly* won't fade away! CGW

The Exclusive On CGW Exclusives

Maybe we missed something, but it seems like some magazines are touting "exclusives" in a sense we don't quite understand. When *CGW* uses the term "exclusive," it means that the article in question contains material that cannot be found anywhere else. We would not use the term to describe our CES Report, for example, because we assume that all of the magazines which cover computer games will be seeing the same games in the same basic condition that we are seeing them. We would not use the term to describe a review, because we assume that all of the magazines get the same game.

Our *Ultima VII* coverage should be considered an exclusive because *CGW* is the only magazine that has the means and has taken the time to glean the behind-the-scenes coverage provided in this article. The editors of *CGW* consistently strive to bring unique coverage from new perspectives to our readers. Any other kind of so-called "exclusive" is empty hype.

ORIGIN
We create worlds.

Russell Sipe
Computer Gaming World
130 Chaparral Court, Suite 260
Anaheim Hills, CA 92808
August 16, 1991

Dear Russell,

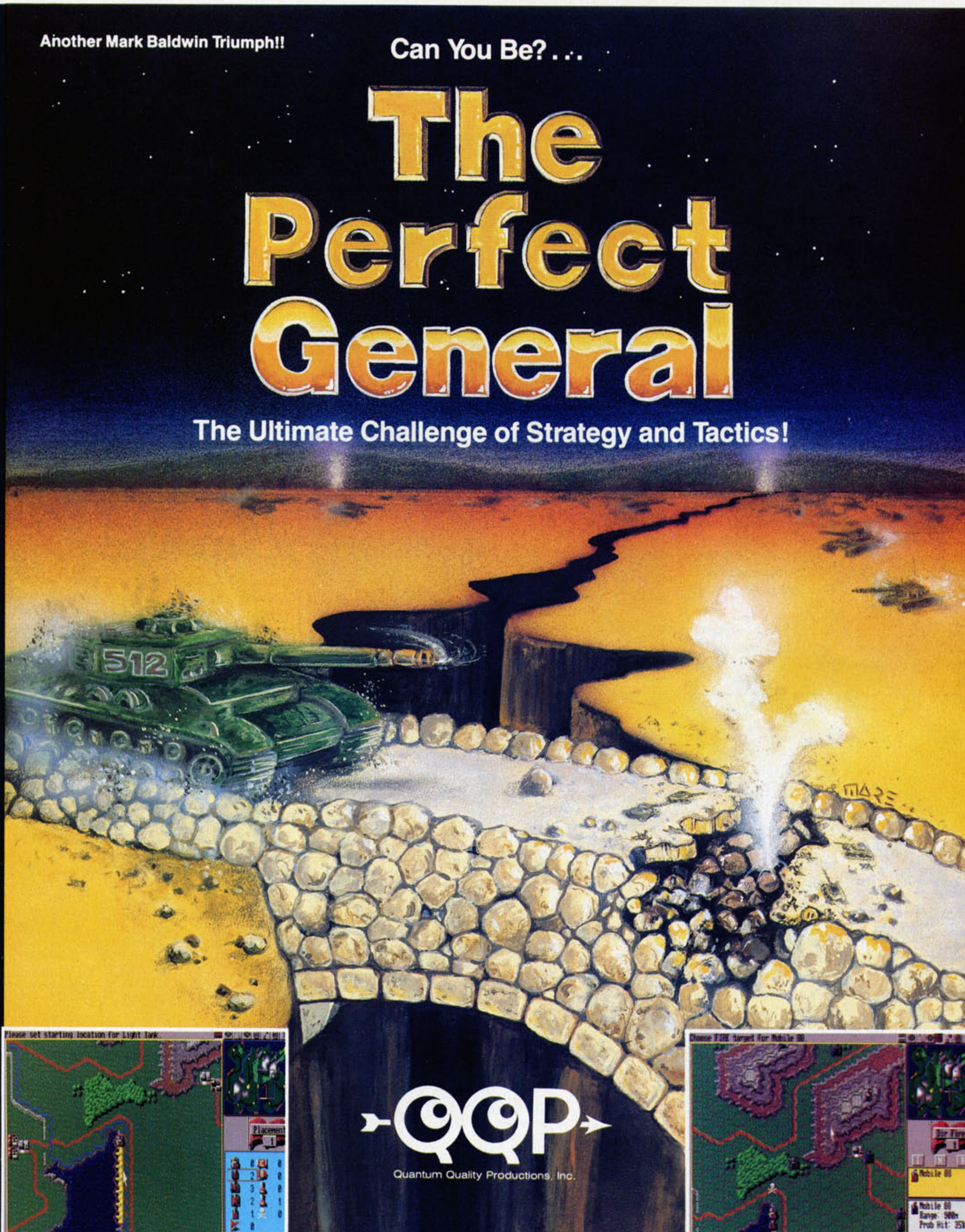
We were very pleased that Computer Gaming World devoted so much time and sincere effort in preparing your exclusive advance coverage of Ultima VII. Johnny not only had the opportunity to glean the behind-the-scenes story from the Ultima VII software development team but also got the outside world's first look at the game!

I hope the coverage and screen shots made exclusively available to Computer Gaming World will provide you and your readers a unique look at the making of Ultima VII and the people behind it.

Cordially,

Pat Price Monroe

Pat Price Monroe
Director of Marketing

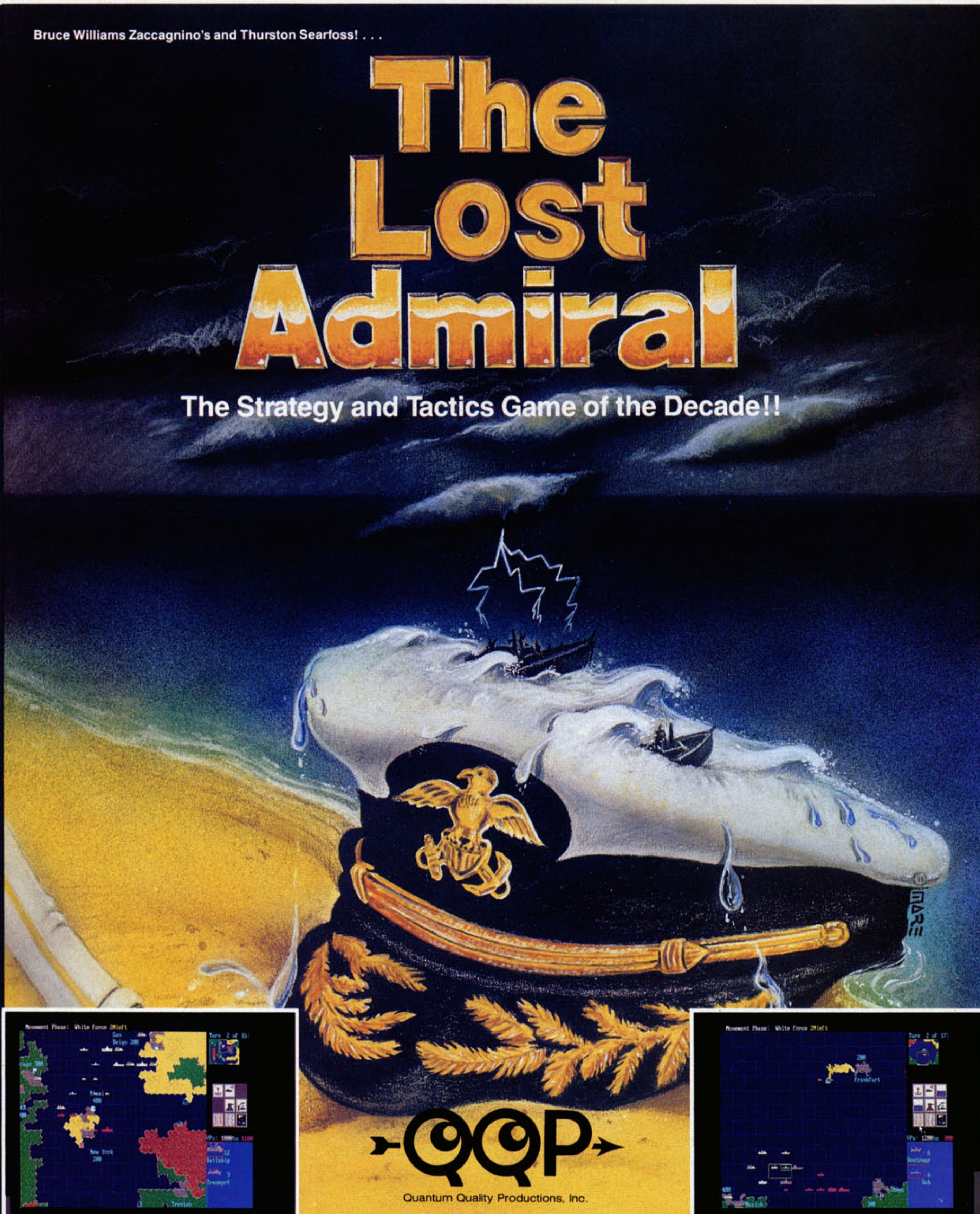


This game is based on a twelve year old tournament series and includes a highly refined yet simple playing system.

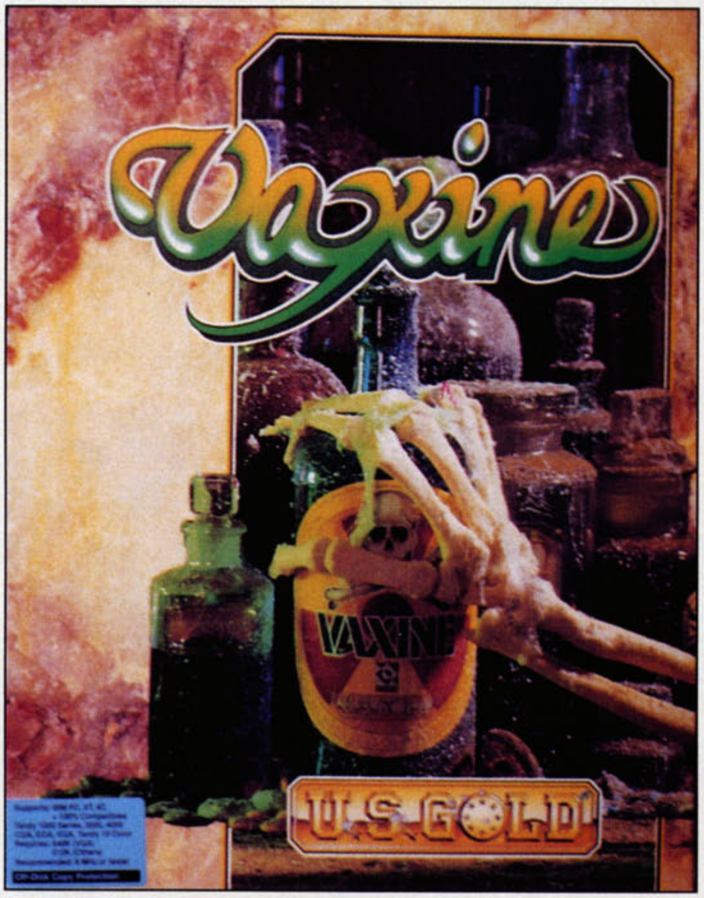
- Gorgeous playing field and landscapes.
- Clean and simple interface.
- Two difficulty levels.

- You control every move and fire of your forces.
- Superior artificial intelligence.
- One or two players, human or computer, plus play by modem.
- A wide range of intriguing scenarios.
- The thrill and sounds of artillery, tanks and infantry in action.

"The Perfect General" computer game is IBM PC and Amiga compatible. It can be obtained through your favorite retailer or ordered direct by calling: 1-908-788-2799.


Bruce Williams Zaccagnino's and Thurston Searfoss! . . .
The Lost Admiral
The Strategy and Tactics Game of the Decade!!
QQP
Quantum Quality Productions, Inc.





TITLE:	Vaxine
SYSTEMS:	Amiga, Atari ST, IBM
PRICE:	$39.95
COPY PROTECT:	Non-repro Code Wheel
PUBLISHER:	U.S. Gold San Jose, CA

A Shot in the Arm

U.S. Gold's Vaxine

by Allen L. Greenberg

Were *CGW*'s eminent "wargame-ologist," M. Evan Brooks, to evaluate *Vaxine*, he would undoubtedly point out that the program does not resemble a true war against a virus even one tiny bit. Thus, to satisfy my distinguished colleague Evan and other immutable sticklers for reality, this reviewer must hastily point out that *Vaxine* is not the same as *vaccine*.

"But," points out our Mr. Brooks (hypothetically), "viruses do not resemble basketballs; bouncing stars are not part of the viral replication process and the interior of presidential personages do not resemble an endless display of kitchen floor tiles." To this must come the smug reply, "How do you know?"

Presidential Antidote

Vaxine is a fast-moving, graphically stunning, shoot-'em-up arcade program imported from Europe by **U.S. Gold**. The premise of the game, as is the case with many European arcade games, serves as mere candy-coating for the real action to be found within. For the record, however, a miniaturized hero has entered the body of the U.S. President in order to combat a life-threatening virus.

Vaxine takes place on a seemingly endless play field with the familiar checkerboard floor pattern. The player's point of view is from within an invisible vehicle which glides effortlessly in all directions. The vehicle's movement can be controlled by a choice of either mouse, joystick or keyboard. Indeed, the movement of the vehicle is apparently free of friction or drag of any kind and one of the first skills the player must master is how to avoid the dizzying momentum the vehicle can obtain and hence, bring it to a complete stop at the necessary point.

Colored "Shots"

Appearing like a troop of well-trained basketballs, the enemy arrives on the playing field after a short grace period. These bouncing spheres are what the player must destroy, using an invisible cannon without the aid of cross-hairs or any other aiming devices. The invaders come in one of three different colors and each one may only be destroyed by a missile which is of the same color. For this purpose, the player is, naturally enough, equipped with three sets of differently colored missiles.

Scattered about the play field are small domes that represent the friendly home bases which must be protected. Left alone, the

enemy will bond together and form deadly clusters which will surround the domes and destroy them. When all domes are annihilated, the game is over. The game will also conclude if the player exhausts any one set of the three series of differently colored missiles.

A round of *Vaxine* may be considered successfully completed when all viruses on the play field have been eliminated. With each of these successes, play becomes more difficult in the next round — the enemy becomes noticeably more aggressive and, after some time, two new creatures appear. "Spitters" are very difficult to kill and roam the play field producing new enemy cells, while "hatchers" explode into an entire swarm of the bad guys.

White Cell Counts

With the exception of a 90-day limited warranty, the publishers of *Vaxine* have included precious little to comfort the player in his campaign against the invading hoard. Bouncing stars and "star-trees," when properly attacked, will restock one color of the hero's ammunition. The player may also elect, at great expense of ammunition, to send out strands of connected missiles which may charm some enemy clusters into self-destruction. Of questionable value are black gateways which appear and disappear throughout the game. They don't actually lead anywhere, but flying through them will cause all enemies to freeze on the spot. The effect does not last long and the creatures return to life much nastier than before their brief hibernation.

Vaxine will also attempt to alert indecisive players as to where the enemy is to be found. It does this by instantly erecting billboard notices on the play field which advertise movement in a particular direction. More often than not, however, this reviewer followed these signs to find no action at all. Finally, certain sound effects will also give clues as to what the enemy is up to.

Animation enthusiasts who enjoy the computer-generated illusion of fluid, three-dimensional movement should be particularly fond of how well this effect is achieved in *Vaxine*. Objects which float across the screen do so with such grace as can only be compared to that found in live-action movies featuring Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers.

The Prescription

Potential purchasers should be aware, however, that *Vaxine* is an arduous arcade exercise and probably not for the casual player. The bouncing balls are not at all easy to kill and the player has only a short period of time to do so before the play field becomes saturated with multiplying enemy creatures. Unfortunately, the player's missiles, the attacking viruses and the friendly bases are all sphere-shaped and this, of course, adds to the confusion.

Both IBM and Amiga versions of *Vaxine* will install on a hard drive — a rare treat for Amiga owners for whom European arcade games almost never make this concession. Copy protection is via a non-reproducible code wheel which uses black printing on black cardboard. *Vaxine* is clearly a product for hard-core arcade fanatics who enjoy wonderfully abstract graphics. Sensitive students of biology and immunology (and Evan Brooks) should avoid even reading the manual. **CGW**

Warning: Although "The Scorpion's Tale" takes place in a warm and comfortable tavern of the mind, complete with a nice, cozy fire of vibrant images, our resident storyteller conjures up illuminating hints about games. ***If the gentle reader eschews hints, let him beware!***



Scorpion's Tale

Legend's Timequest

Autumn is just about here, and none too soon. Some people may like summer, but this past one was a bit too hot for my liking. Even Fred, who doesn't mind the weather much, was getting a little grumpy (or more grumpy than even a grue would usually be). All I can say is, it's about time things cooled down... and speaking of time....

There's nothing like a jaunt through the centuries to remind you that the world has a past that goes back beyond last week. Maybe. The past, as well as the present and future, might not be around much longer. Not if a certain nihilistic Temporal Corps renegade has his way.

For reasons that are never explained (unfortunately), a certain Lt. Vettenmeyer has decided to go back in time and mess up recorded history. You, a raw recruit, are detailed to stop him. There are ten specific eras where Vettenmeyer (or V for short) has been gumming up the works, so there's no guessing about what has to be fixed.

Seeing to it that everything happens the way it's supposed to, however, is another matter entirely. *TimeQuest* is one of those deceptive games that seems simple, then hits you over the head with complications.

Aside from the Big Ten, there are another thirty-nine eras to visit, so the task is not exactly a straightforward "go here, fix it up, go there, fix it up" type of job. There's a lot of bouncing around between the centuries. In addition, V leaves you little love notes in different places, and you have to collect all of them to find out where he is and how to get to him. Make sure you write these messages down as you find them.

In short, you've got a lot of work to do here. The manual recommends that you make a chart of all the times and places to visit, and I heartily agree with that. Fifty-four locations, with something or other in most of them, can overwhelm you if you're not careful. So make up the chart before you begin.

Five places you can "X" out immediately, as there is nothing of importance in any of them: Mexico 1588, 1798, 1940; Baghdad 1940; and Cairo 1940. All the others need to be visited at least once, and sometimes more.

In the ten special eras, there is always someone (Caesar, Sir Francis Drake, Attila, Mussolini, etc.) who is wearing a special bracelet. These are "gifts" from V. When you foil his plans, these bracelets vanish. Don't worry about that; it's just a sign that you've done your job and history is proceeding on course.

At this point, things become difficult, at least for me in terms of writing this column. Unlike most adventure games, which tend toward linearity with a single straight storyline, *TimeQuest* is composed of "chains" of eras. For instance, Rome 44 BC (Caesar) is complete in itself, but also starts a chain that ends in both Baghdad AD 800 (Haroun Al-Rashid) and Peking AD 1215 (Genghis Khan).

So it isn't possible to do a typical step-by-step journey through this one and noting the actual parts to the chains would give away a bit too much. With that in mind, then, I am just listing out the various eras with some hints for each one. Those that have nothing in them, or contain only a message from Vettenmeyer (which is always very obvious and easy to find) are omitted, with one exception. Remember that these eras are mentioned in numerical order only. It's up to you to figure out how they connect with each other.

1361 BC

Rome: Visit the Academy. Talk to the old man, and note carefully what he says to you. Keep it in mind as you go up the line.

Cairo: Few things will be royal enough for the boy Pharaoh. When you figure out what will do, don't let it go to your head.

Peking: Don't drink the poison (unless you want to end the game very quickly). Read the tablets. Rather Zen-like, eh? This is something to really think about.

Dover: The solution to Stonehenge should dawn on you sooner or later. Be sure to talk to the old man (not the same one as at the Academy). Visit all places here.

Baghdad: Enjoy the top-down view of the Hanging Gardens. The Tower comes later.

Mexico: Cannibalism and sun worship; what a nasty combination. I know about a cover-up; do you?

44 BC

Rome: One of the Big Ten. You must win the right race to visit Caesar. Every-

thing you need is at hand; nothing comes from anywhere else in this one. Don't forget the lady's invitation.

Cairo: (ahem!)

Peking: Visit the Great Wall. Blow your brains out (heh).

Dover: Just go all over.

Mexico: Tricky. A visitation from a god is necessary. What to put on the cushion requires some headwork.

AD 452

Rome: Another of the Big Ten, involving Attila the Hun. Handle this one with care, or it might blow up in your face.

Peking: It is better to give than to receive.

Dover: Be extremely careful here, as you can die very quickly. You have only one chance to do something. If you don't manage it, restore the game; do *not* save after getting out. Save only when you have been successful. *Mexico:* When you go through the maze (easy in daylight), write down the steps. In later eras, you'll have to go through here again, and there won't be any light.

AD 800

Rome: Charlemagne, yet another of the Big Ten. Part of the longest and trickiest chain in the game. This and Napoleon must be done simultaneously. Save them for the end. Getting the crown out of the chapel is only a third of the puzzle. If you find that hard, you might want to sleep on it.

Peking: Philanthropy has its rewards.

Baghdad: Trial and error here. Saving and restoring in the harem is the best way to go about it. Don't forget the veils. It should be pretty obvious to you at least who's been fooling around with one of the wives. Now prove it.

Mexico: Go ahead, don't be afraid of the dark.

1215

Cairo: You have to make the dark a bit lighter to see your way. That's the easy part. Deactivating the trap is another matter. Now, who would know something about the internal arrangements of a pyramid? Pity you can't get through the crack, though. Maybe some other time.

Peking: Genghis Khan, another of the Big Ten. Getting the gates open (from the inside, of course) requires big bucks (or yuan... yuan what army? No, you don't need an army, just money and a lascivious mind).

Dover: The only stand-alone, do-it-most-anytime Big Ten scenario. You don't need anything from anywhere else, and you don't get anything you need anywhere else. This one is really pretty simple. And remember, monks can read.

Baghdad: Chinese merchant turning up his nose at your offered treasures? Well, I suppose a man of the east wants something really special.

Mexico: If you look like you, of course the priest is going to kill you for interrupting the sacrifice. No weapon? Obviously, you haven't been in the Mexican hot tub yet (hehe).

1519

Rome: So simple, it's almost not worth mentioning. Talk to the vendor, visit the church.



Baghdad: No drachma? Come back when you have one. Talk to the mother. Make a date with a girl to urn her brother's admiration.

Mexico: If you set things up properly earlier, all you need to do is hang out and watch the show.

1588

Dover: Good Queen Bess, of the Big Ten. Staunch Protestant and Defender of the Faith. By the way, that sailor down in the bar is a lot more literate than he looks or you might suspect.

Baghdad: No badge? Well, if you didn't make a jackass of yourself earlier, that won't be a problem.

1798

Rome: Napoleon, another of the Big Ten. Getting in to see him is easy (think lullaby). Now convince this slip of a man to go to Egypt. That shouldn't be too hard. He's *always* wanted to be Emperor.

Cairo: Pyramid closed? No sweat, just pass on in, so to speak.

Peking: Is the Forbidden City forbidden to you? My, my. I guess your fate is sealed then. Would a conk on the head help?

Dover: This one is really easy. Just prove to Nelson where Nappy is going next. Nelson's literate, too.

1940

Rome: This place requires several visits. It helps to look in here before moving on to Dover. You'll have to come back a couple more times after that. Pay attention to the exhibit.

Dover: You need to stop by here a couple of times, too (two?). If you've been to Rome, you should have a pretty good idea of what to do during the broadcast.The second visit is just a pick-up.

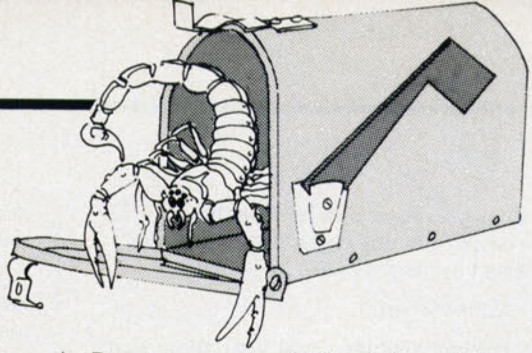
Peking: I wouldn't go outside until afternoon, if I were you, and take a good look at that Molotov cocktail! It may not be what you think.

The Endgame: This is where things really get bizarre. **Infocom** veterans who have played *Sorcerer* may find it a little easier, since they know all about what happens when younger and older selves start running around the place. The key to this section is careful and correct use of the two time portals, plus making note of what's said and what's happening at every instance. Exact duplication of actions is vital. Be sure to save the game in the portrait hallway before going up the stairs (and no, you don't need any of the bracelets).

Whew! All this time travelling and running around with multiple selves was quite a trip, eh? I hope (for the sake of the world, and possibly even the universe) you made it through safely. While you catch your breath and rest up for the next extravaganza, remember that if you need help with an adventure game, you can reach me in the following ways:

On Delphi: visit the GameSIG (under the Groups and Clubs menu).**On GEnie:** Stop by the Games RoundTable (type: Scorpia to reach the Games RT).**By US Mail:** (you must enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you live in the United States) Scorpia, PO Box 338, Gracie Station, New York, NY 10028.

Until next time, happy adventuring! **cgw**



Scorpion's Mail

The back room is certainly filling up fast again. In spite of the low number of releases this summer, the old mailbox has rarely been empty. Just as well that the letters go to a box instead of being personally delivered; I'd hate to think of all the mail carriers who'd have hernias by now (grin).

Before we get to the good stuff, I have to comment on a certain phenomenon. Over the past several months, there has been an astonishing rise in questions about the old **Infocom** games: the *real* old ones, such as *Zork, Trinity, Deadline, Sorcerer,* etc. — and not all from the same person, either (just in case you were wondering!).

It makes me feel good to know there are still people out there who can appreciate and enjoy quality text adventures in this day of fancy graphics and no-type interfaces. Not that there's anything necessarily wrong with graphic adventures... just that there was something special about those **Infocom** games that set them apart from all the others, graphic or not.

This is proven especially by the fact that *the* most-asked question in the letters is "where can I get more of these games?" Alas, I wish I had a real answer to that one. Unfortunately, Infocoms are rare these days and likely to become more so as time goes on, unless the Rumor Guy happens to be right in his speculation that **Sierra** might be buying the rights to republish them from **Mediagenic**.

If he's wrong, he'll not only have to watch out for our old buddy, Fred, but that will mean that pretty much the only way to get them is from a friend who might have 'em, to find a few at computer show flea markets, on the dusty back shelves of your local computer store or at a computer club where some of the members may have an Infocom or two they're willing to trade or sell.

So getting your hands on them is going to be a tough job, but those classics are worth the effort. And, of course, I've played them all myself, which means even if Invisiclues aren't available, you can still get help when you need it (grin).

Okay, on to the mail!

Bane Of The Cosmic Forge: One thing I didn't mention in my previous hint column is that *Bane* has more than one ending (aha!). For instance, when you get to the final showdown, you don't necessarily *have* to kill Bane and Rebecca. Something quite different happens instead. The trigger for this interesting diversion is back in the tombs under the Isle of The Dead. After you receive a certain item, get rid of it immediately. This has to be done immediately or the trigger won't go off and you'll get the standard ending instead (standard meaning having to kill Bane and Rebecca).

Indiana Jones and The Last Crusade: Getting into the tomb of the knight in the catacombs of Venice need not be difficult. Just remember that there's left to right, and left to right. It all depends on your point of view (and you did read the computer diary, right?).

The Fool's Errand: A couple of puzzles in this one have folks tearing out their hair. Since we don't want anyone going prematurely bald (after all, hair replacement isn't cheap and the money you save can be spent on more games!), a little helping hand is necessary. In "The Thief" (aka "The Eye In The Sky"), don't let horizontal thinking get you down. Try taking a new direction or two, and see what turns up. For "The Boat," the first three words require only simple anagramming. You don't need to exchange letters between them; if you do that, things may become hopelessly scrambled. Just work with each set of letters as is (and the words are ordinary ones, too).

Martian Dreams: The mysterious laboratory you hear about is something you won't be able to enter until you are very far into the game. The only way to get in is to melt some of the icecaps and it's a long road to that event. So if you've been puzzling over this part of the game, leave it for now.

The Secret of Monkey Island: Yes, we have no bananas... or, at least, some people feel that way. There do not seem to be enough bananas around to satisfy that monkey. What a pity. If only you get could some more bananas from the tree. While you ponder that, take some time out to admire the local native art. After all, it's only a stone's throw from the beach. Or is that the other way around?

King's Quest V: As some players have discovered, it's not so easy to get out of the Forbidden Forest once you're inside. Presuming you've dealt with the witch (an absolute must to safe egress), remember the old saying about catching flies. I hope you can bear it.

Savage Empire: Several people have reported difficulties with large, carnivorous dinosaurs of the *T. Rex* variety, particularly when trying to visit the Urali tribe. Life can be much easier (not to mention, much prolonged) by taking a cruise on the lake first. Ya never know who ya might meet. Even if he does have rocks in his head.

Eye Of The Beholder: By the time you read this, the Beholder Bonus contests for the IBM and Amiga will be over. So, I am now able to answer questions (via mail) and give hints about the hidden quests in the game. One in particular that has given people trouble is the bonus for level six, the place where all the Kenku roam. This one requires all the Kenku eggs. Don't miss a single one. After you've figured out what to do with them (no, not omelettes!), it's okay to use them for other purposes. The eggs don't regenerate. So, if you mess up here, you'll never get the bonus.

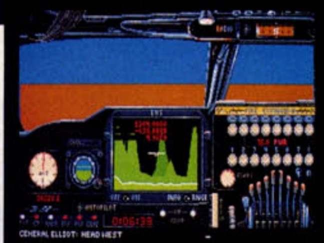
Ultima VI: Several readers have written to tell me that the bug regarding 8th level spells has been fixed. Previously, even when you did the correct thing in the game, Xiao would not offer you any 8th level spells. Now, you are able to buy them. Unfortunately, none of my correspondents thought to mention the version number of the game they were playing (ouch). So, the only way to find out which one you have is to see if Xiao will sell the spells to you or not after you satisfy her requirements. If not, then you may want to send your disks back to Origin for an upgrade. Note, however, that 8th level spells are not required for finishing the game.

That's it for this look into the mailbag. Remember if you need help with an adventure game, you can reach me in the following ways:

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The Categories

Strategy (ST): Games that emphasize strategic planning and problem-solving.

Simulation (SI): Games based on first-person perspectives of real-world environments.

Adventure (AD): Games that allow you to take an alter ego through a storyline or series of events.

Role-Playing Adventure (RP): Adventure games that are based on character development (usually involving attributes).

Wargames (WG): Simulations of historical or futuristic warfare from a command perspective.

Action/Arcade (AC): Computer games that emphasize hand-eye coordination and reflexes.

Games are often listed in more than one category. In this case, the first listed category is considered primary. In order to be recognized as the "Top Game" in a given category, a game must be listed as being primarily of that specific type.

Top Role-Playing



Top Simulation



THE TOP TEN GAMES

No.	Name	Source	Category	Avg. # Resp.	Rating
1.	*Wing Commander*	*Origin*	*AC*	*97*	*10.59*
2.	*Railroad Tycoon*	*MicProse*	*ST*	*84*	*10.53*
3.	*Red Baron*	*Dynamix*	*SI*	*74*	*10.26*
4.	*Warlords*	*SSG*	*WG,ST*	*54*	*9.87*
5.	*Harpoon*	*Three-Sixty*	*WG*	*78*	*9.46*
	Ultima VI	*Origin*	*RP*	*73*	*9.46*
7.	*Space Quest IV*	*Sierra*	*AD*	*44*	*9.44*
8.	*M-1 Tank Platoon*	*MicroProse*	*SI,WG*	*76*	*9.33*
9.	*Eye of the Beholder*	*SSI*	*RP*	*73*	*9.29*
10.	*King's Quest V*	*Sierra*	*AD*	*51*	*9.25*

No.	Name	Source	Category	Avg. # Resp.	Rating
11.	Lemmings	Psygnosis	AC	31	9.24
12.	Command HQ	MicroPlay	ST	53	9.21
13.	Bane of the Cosmic Forge	Sir-Tech	RP	54	9.20
14.	Second Front	SSI	WG	38	9.17
15.	Mech Warrior	Activision	ST	54	9.16
16.	Wings	Cinemaware	AC	33	9.15
17.	Quest for Glory II	Sierra	AD,RP	28	9.10
18.	Red Storm Rising	MicroProse	SI	73	9.09
19.	Silent Service II	MicroProse	SI	62	9.08
20.	The Secret of Monkey Island	LucasArts	AD	33	9.06
21.	Battlehawks 1942	LucasFilm	AC,SI	86	9.05
22.	Ultima V	Origin	RP	91	9.01
23.	Quest for Glory	Sierra	RP	57	9.00
	Lords of Rising Sun	Cinemaware	AC,ST	48	9.00
25.	Space Quest III	Sierra	AD	34	8.97
	Sword of Aragon	SSI	WG,ST	45	8.97
27.	Populous	Electronic Arts	ST	114	8.96
	Romance of the 3 Kingdoms	Koei	ST,RP	31	8.96
29.	Wasteland	Electronic Arts	RP	117	8.95
30.	Overrun	SSI	WG	24	8.93
31.	Falcon	Spectrum Holobyte	SI	62	8.90
32.	Dragon Wars	Interplay	RP	30	8.87
	NFL Challenge	XOR Corporation	ST	86	8.87
	Indianapolis 500	EA	SI	32	8.87
35.	Elvira	Accolade	RP	31	8.82
36.	Power Monger	Electronic Arts	ST	45	8.81
	Might & Magic II	NewWorld	RP	54	8.81
38.	The Magic Candle	Mindcraft	RP	43	8.80
	LHX Attack Chopper	EA	AC	25	8.80
40.	Project Stealth Ftr	MicroProse	SI	29	8.79
41.	Bard's Tale III	EA	RP	54	8.77
42.	Airborne Ranger	MicroProse	AC	74	8.76
43.	Bandit Kings	Koei	ST,RP	28	8.75
44.	Covert Action	Microprose	AD	30	8.73
	Jack Nicklaus Unlimited Golf	Accolade	ST	26	8.73
46.	Battles of Napoleon	SSI	WG	30	8.72
	Battlechess	Interplay	ST	62	8.72
48.	Action Stations	Conflict Analytics	WG	22	8.71
	Breach 2	Omnitrend	ST,RP	29	8.71
	Starflight II	Electronic Arts	RP	63	8.71
51.	Neuromancer	Interplay	AD	33	8.70
52.	F-15 Strike Eagle II	MicroProse	SI	58	8.69
53.	Typhoon of Steel	SSI	WG	43	8.67
	Curse of the Azure Bonds	SSI	RP	70	8.67
55.	Rise of the Dragon	Dynamix/Sierra	AD	40	8.66

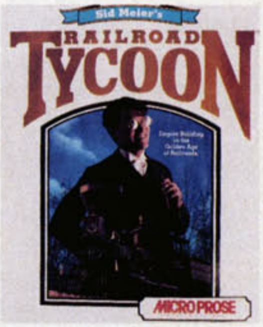
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The Games in CGW's Hall of Fame Have Been Highly Rated by our Readers over Time. They are Worthy of Play by All.

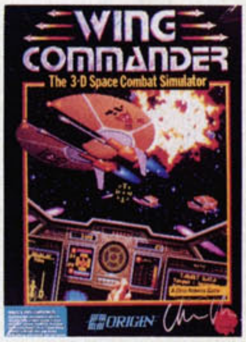
Bard's Tale I
Chessmaster
Dungeon Master
Earl Weaver Baseball
Empire
F19 Stealth Fighter
Gettysburg
Gunship
Kampfgruppe
Mech Brigade
Might & Magic
M.U.L.E.
Pirates
SimCity
Starflight
Their Finest Hour
Ultima III
Ultima IV
War in Russia
Wizardry

No.	Name	Source	Category	Avg. # Resp.	Rating
56.	Indiana Jones/Graphic Adventure	Lucasfilm	AD	29	8.65
	Ballistyx	Psygnosis	AC	20	8.65
58.	Wayne Gretzky Hockey	Bethesda	AC,ST	36	8.62
59.	Pool of Radiance	SSI	RP	116	8.61
60.	King's Quest IV	Sierra	AD	58	8.59
	Flight Simulator 4.0	Microsoft	SI	42	8.58
62.	Buck Rogers	SSI	RP	39	8.57
63.	Chessmaster 2100	Software Toolworks	ST	42	8.56
64.	Genghis Khan	Koei	ST,RP	34	8.54
65.	Future Wars	Interplay	AD	24	8.53
66.	Panzer Strike	SSI	WG	68	8.51
	Champions of Krynn	SSI	RP	65	8.51
	Leisure Suit III	Sierra	AD	56	8.51
	Sword of the Samurai	MicropProse	ST,RP	40	8.51
70.	Savage Empire	Origin	RP	37	8.48
71.	Manhunter 2	Sierra	AD	31	8.42
72.	Nobunaga's Ambition II	Koei	ST,RP	20	8.40
73.	TV Sports Football	Cinemaware	AC,ST	50	8.39
	Secret of the Silver Blades	SSI	RP	47	8.39
75.	Wings of Fury	Broderbund	AC	52	8.38
76.	Strike Fleet	Electronic Arts	WG	79	8.37
77.	Fire Brigade	Panther	WG	30	8.34
78.	BattleTech II: Revenge	Infocom	WG,RP	42	8.33
79.	Rocket Ranger	Cinemaware	AC,AD	75	8.32
80.	Nobunaga's Ambition	Koei	ST,RP	20	8.30
81.	Drakkhen	Data East	RP	32	8.27
	688 Attack Sub	EA	SI,ST	59	8.27
83.	Lord of the Rings	Interplay	RP	31	8.26
84.	Manhunter	Sierra	AD	72	8.25
85.	Centurion	EA	ST	49	8.24
86.	Police Quest	Sierra	AD	98	8.23
87.	Starglider II	MicroPlay	AC,SI	65	8.22
88.	Jack Nickluas Greatest 18 Holes	Accolade	ST	32	8.21
89.	Ishido	Accolade	ST	27	8.20
	Search for the King	Accolade	AD	20	8.20
	Leisure Suit Larry II	Sierra	AD	61	8.20
92.	Loom	LucasArts	AD	38	8.18
93.	Abrams Battle Tank	EA	SI	31	8.16
94.	Knights of the Sky	MicroProse	SI	45	8.15
95	The Colonel's Bequest	Sierra	AD	28	8.14
96.	Tetris	Spectrum Holobyte	AC	46	8.13
	BattleChess II: Chinese Chess	Interplay	ST	21	8.13
	Full Metal Planet	Data East	ST	32	8.13
99.	Conquest of Camelot	Sierra	AD	33	8.12
	Vette!	Spectrum Holobyte	SI	26	8.12

Top Strategy



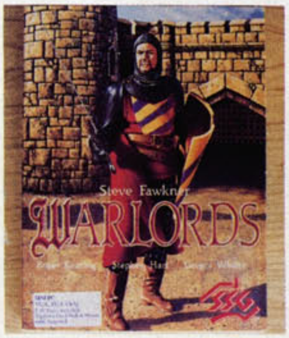
Top Action



Top Adventure



Top Wargame

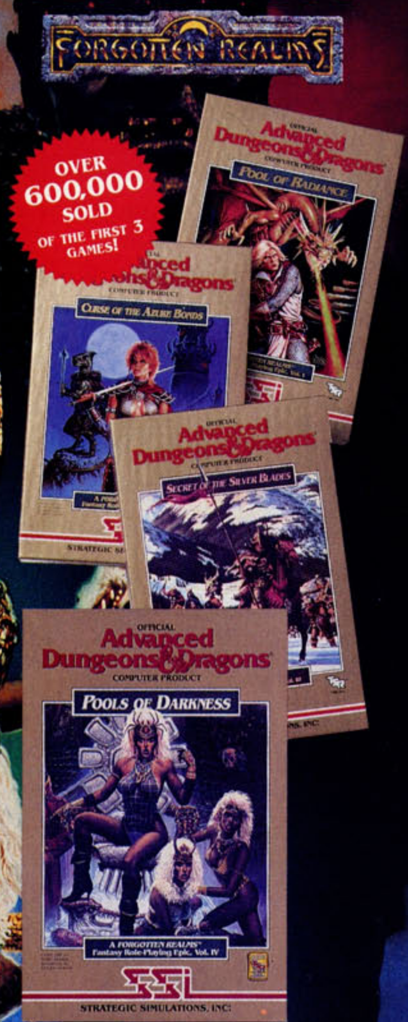


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Rare Insights Into SSI's Medieval Lords, Part 2

by Tom E. Hughes, Jr.



In the previous installment of the secret insights into **SSI**'s *Medieval Lords*, formulae were offered which might help an advisor to better understand the "mathematical" workings of medieval society (as presented by this game). Again, with the help of designer Martin Campion, here are some further insights into the actual formulae and thought processes used by the computer in determining the fate of empires in *Medieval Lords*. As before, knowledge of these insights might be considered a violation of the "spirit of the game" (where a little knowledge is all that's expected of a player), but for those who make a *study* of history, as Dr. Campion does, here is a look into the "inner workings" of medieval society.

Before the Age of Science (Revisited)

What is presented in this article are several exact formulae used in *Medieval Lords*. To better present them, some abbreviations have been used as follows:

Bs	= Bureaucracy strength
Ns	= Nobility strength
Nl	= Nobility's loyalty
Ts	= Town strength
Tl	= Town loyalty
Pop	= Population of the province concerned
Castles	= Number of castles in province concerned
Dist	= Distance from army's location to province concerned
DF	= Distance Factor (see paragraph below)
Rule	= Leader's Rulership value
Warlike	= Leader's Warlikeness value
Char	= Leader's Charisma value
Gen	= Leader's Generalship value
Rand(#)	= a random number from zero to #

Many formulae include a "distance factor" element which reads "DF." More exactly, that formula is: "Distance x (19 - current Century *[which ranges from 11 to 16]*) / 2." Without getting out a calculator, what this element means in a nutshell is, if one can easily move the army to the province concerned (i.e., if it is not over a body of water), *move it there first, then* perform the desired action (this "distance factor" always lessen one's chance for success). Remember, moving (except across bodies of water) is a "free" action, and the upshot of this formula element is to emphasize that success is more readily obtained if ruling is performed "in person" rather than from a distance.

Elements in [brackets] are explained in the line below the formula. When a Leader is off on a Crusade, his default ratings are all "3s" when it comes to domestic actions.

Buckets Full of Ducats

Money is good. *More money* is better. To this end, it behooves a player to have a large tax base and shear those sheep with great efficiency.

One's tax base in each province is the town strength times the population (Ts x Pop), which can be thought of as one's "gross income" on a 1040 form. These ducats are plundered by the local nobles (which "disappear") and what remains is the "King's share" which the player receives. To this is *added* ducats received from an Assembly, if one is present in the player's empire and it is greater in strength than one. (Those debating societies *are* useful for their deep pockets!) This formula is:

(Ts + Assembly strength) / 4 x Pop = Additional income

The "King's share" of this tax booty is equal to the "gross income" less a comparison between the King's Rulership and Bureaucratic strength (which increase the "King's share") and the Noble's strength and Town strength of the area (which reduces the "King's share"). The exact formula is:

Increasing Taxes Kept

"King's share" = "King's parts" / (Ns + Ts/2 + "King's parts")
"King's parts" = Rule / 2 + (Bs + 1) x (Bs + 1)

Thus, even though Town strength (Ts) both creates and "takes back" some of the taxes it generates, Town strength *creates* much more than it takes back, whereas the Nobles create *no* income, but take a good deal away.

Other types of income include "off-map" income, "New World" income (for the owners of Lisbon *or* Seville after 1500) and "Imperial" income (for owning key "trading" provinces).

The Slings and Arrows

If, in one's most cynical moment, it can be supposed that war is a mathematician's true calling, *Medieval Lords* raises combat formulae to an art form (presumably giving a new twist to the phrase "art of war"). Here, then, are several key combat formulae for combat:

Determining an Army's Attack Factor:

"Attack Combat Factor" (ACF) = Vassals + (Nobles + Mercenaries + Household + Nomad) x 2 + Gen x 3 + Tactical rating x 5 - [(Warlike - Gen) x 2]
[if Warlike is greater than Gen]

Determining an Army's Defense Factor*:

"Defense Combat Factor" (DCF) = Nobles + (Vassals + Mercenaries + Household + Nomad) x 2 + Gen x 3 + Tactical rating x 5 - [(Warlike - Gen) x 2] - [[(Dist -4) x 2]]
*When defending with King's army as opposed to local forces.
[if Warlike is greater than Gen]
[[This is used if the distance the King's army traveled to defend this province is greater than four]]

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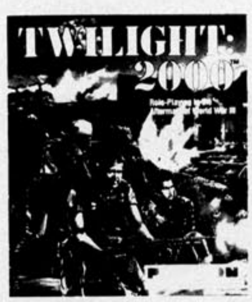
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Determining the Defense Value of "Local Forces":
((Ns x Pop / 2)[/2] + (Ts x Pop / 3)) x 5 / 4 +"Local Leader" x 3
[if the King's army includes *any* vassals in it]

This is the value if there is either *no* rebellion in the province or *both* the nobles and towns are in revolt.

The value of the "Local Leader" is based on the following table:

Value	Chance
2	5%
3	10%
4	15%
5	20%
6	20%
7	15%
8	10%
9	5%

These ACF and DCF are compared to determine the attacker's percent chance of winning (as displayed to the player). That formula is: ACF - DCF + 50

Swords at Their Throats

Naturally, in a game like *Medieval Lords*, conquest of new provinces is paramount to building up the might of the empire. It is one thing to be able to win a battle, it is another to own the battlefield after a bloody day. Note that this is one of the few formulae where castles have any applicable value (reducing the chance of conquest from zero to an eight percent maximum). Here's the magic formula to ultimate victory in conquest:

40 - Dist x 2 + (Household + Mercenary) x 3 / 2 + Nomads + Nobles / 2 - (Ts x Tl) / 2 - (Ns x Nl) / 2 + Siege Advantage x 5 + (4 - "Battle Result") x 10 - Castles x 2 - (Actions per turn allowed - actions used this turn already) x 5

"Battle Result" Table	Value
Overwhelming Victory	1
Ordinary Victory	2
Marginal Victory	3
Marginal Defeat	4
Ordinary Defeat	5
Disastrous Defeat	6

The Peasants Are Revolting! (You Can Say That Again)

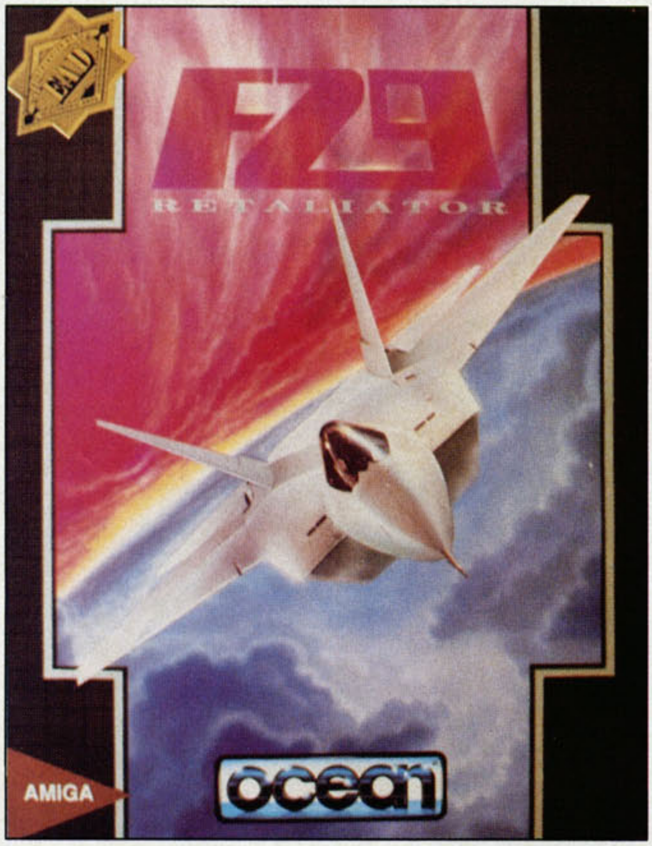
Yes, despite one's best efforts for maximum taxation and recruitment of their sons to war, the peasants and nobles don't always perceive the greater needs of the empire. Occasionally, they will revolt and distract a busy monarch who would rather be slaughtering his *neighbor's* peasants and nobles, rather than his own. Here are the indicators that a revolt can be crushed:

Chance of Crushing a Rebellion:
50 + (Household + Mercenary) x 2 + (Nobles + Nomads) + Vassles / 2 - [10] - Dist x 2
[if the rebellion has been going on for more than three years]

These, then, are a few key secrets for ye counsellors of the Middle Ages. Whisper wisely into thy liege's ear that the empire might flourish! **cgw**



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F-29 Retaliator

Or the ATF on a Budget

by Loyd Case, Jr.

The computer gamer's hangar must be getting full, this year. So far, 1991 has seen the release of *Red Baron*, *Jetfighter II*, *F14 Tomcat*, *Chuck Yeager's Air Combat* and *F-29 Retaliator*. Still to be released this year are: *Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe*, *Falcon 3.0*, *Wing Commander II*, *F117 Stealth Fighter II*, *Gunship 2000* and *Strike Commander*. Whew!

All this activity surely must have produced games suited to the differing tastes of gamers. While some games strive for an extremely high level of realism, like *Falcon 3.0*, others strive for an easier, more minimalist approach. Like the automobile business, there are full-featured games ("luxury cars" which are "loaded"), mid-sized games with a good mix of features ("mid-sized, family cars") and compact games ("econoboxes"). *F-29 Retaliator* is definitely an economical choice — $49.95 versus the projected $69.95 retail of *Falcon 3.0* — and, while it may be "stripped-down" with regard to features, *F-29* still offers a solid game-playing experience, within its limitations.

When the player first fires up *F-29*, there are some introductory graphics screens to set the mood. Even the copy protection screen, asking the player to type in a sector number from any one of the four combat theaters, helps maintain the overall atmosphere of the game. Then the player is prompted to create a pilot character and choose a rank (it's best to start as a lieutenant). One of two fighters can be chosen: the F-22 (recently chosen as the next generation Advanced Tactical Fighter — ATF — by the Pentagon) and the F-29, a purely experimental, forward-swept-wing aircraft. Weapons loads are also variable, and need to be chosen carefully before the mission commences, based on the mission facing the player.

At this point, the would-be pilot is at the main menu. Selection six is called "Zulu Alert," and is essentially a free-flight arcade mode. At this setting, the fighter has infinite ammo (but only 8 chaff and flares!) and flies around until either running out of ammunition or fuel. This scenario offers an excellent way to get a feel for the game, because no harm can come to the pilot character and, take it on faith, there is going to be a *lot* that can harm the pilot.

Other menu selections allow the player to pick the theater of operations (including the Arizona Test Range, Pacific, Middle East and European missions, in ascending order of difficulty). All of these missions allow the pilot to advance in points — but points are never actually displayed. Rather, the character is automatically promoted at certain intervals. Early missions allow an "instant landing" option, but it's best to figure out how to land early in one's career because later missions require the player to land the game before the mission is complete — and the switch from "no landings" to "landings required" happens abruptly.

Sierra Hotel (The Good Stuff)

Except for occasional glitches, *F-29* is one of the smoothest scrolling flight simulators around. Even when there are multiple bogies in the air, the frame rate remains rock steady. The graphics, within the game's limited world, (see below) are good, polygon-rendered drawings. It's also refreshing to see realistic buildings, including control towers, skyscrapers, radar screens and features beyond the usual "Great Pyramid" mountains. The soundtrack and sound effects significantly add to the atmosphere of the game (that is, when using a sound card). Another nice touch is the scrolling map in one of the displays on the fighter console. It's very easy to keep track not only of the fighter's location, but its relative direction as well. The controls are fairly simple and well laid out. The return key selects the current weapon and the mnemonics required for various activities are mostly logical ("G" for landing gear, "F" for flaps, and so on). The joystick control is straightforward as well; button 2 locks onto a target and button 1 fires.



TITLE:	F-29 Retaliator
SYSTEM:	Amiga, IBM
COPY PROTECT:	Document Check
PRICE:	$49.95
PUBLISHER:	Ocean Software, Ltd. Manchester, UK


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The flight model is also reasonably good. Sharp turns decrease speed (unlike what occurs in some flight sims), landing gear is damaged if lowered at too high a speed and, while there is no rudder, sharp turns are performed by pulling the stick back as well as pushing it left or right. The only tricky part to *F-29* is landing: landings are very unforgiving, with no crash landings allowed. The player either lands the plane correctly or is dead.

In addition to these features, there is a head-to-head mode available for players with modems.

It's a Small, Small World

As stated earlier, *F-29 Retaliator* is an economical choice. For the most part, this is fine, but there are some areas in which the minimalism detracts from gameplay and realism. The most annoying of these limitations is the size of the "world." *F-29* combats are fought within a 100-square mile area. If the plane is flown outside of this "world," the pilot falls off the edge (good thing Columbus didn't fly airplanes). Well, not quite, but that might as well happen. Actually, the map screen on the control panel turns black. Worse, if the player is chasing an enemy plane that happens to fly off the screen, the enemy plane disappears! More than once, this reviewer was in hot pursuit of an enemy plane, closing in for the kill, only to run out off the edge of the world and lose the target. To top it off, when the jet is flown back into known airspace, more often than not, the previously targeted enemy is now on the player's six!

There are other less annoying but still frustrating problems. The program tends to lock up the system occasionally in the entry and exit screens (though this was never experienced during flight). Also, once the system froze while it was saving the progress file, losing all progress during that session (save early and save often). Every time a new mission starts, the game defaults to keyboard control. The joystick must be manually selected at the start of every mission, not simply upon boot-up. Also, the game is very unforgiving. The player's pilot character can be killed very easily — and there is no save feature, so hitting the reset button is often necessary. Note that progress can be saved for successful pilots, but everything starts over every time a new pilot is created. This may be more real, but detracts from gameplay. This author found the "try it again" feature in *Jetfighter II* to be much more satisfying on this account.

As befits the game (and is typical to imported software), the manual is also minimalist. Nearly half of the rather thin documentation is taken up with mission descriptions. There is a list of available weapons, as well as a catalog of controls, but almost no information on how to use them! For example, there is a panel display for Beyond Visual Range Radar (BVR), as well as weapons that could be effective BVR — but no clue as to how the combination works together.

Small is Beautiful

Despite its flaws, *F-29* is an enjoyable diversion. Its relatively low cost and ease of entry is a boon for those who are either on limited budgets or want a taste of what combat flight simulators are about without reaching the level of complexity in some of the genre leaders. While its handling of the limited flying world and lack of more sophisticated features might turn off the flight sim grognard, *F-29 Retaliator* is a good game for those ready to enter "basic training" in the combat flight simulator category. **cgw**

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"Console"ing Your Imagination With the *Might and Magic* of a *Faery Tale Adventure*

by Peter Olafson



Computer games converted to console format sometimes seem like adults who, arriving late for a big family dinner, are relegated to seats at the children's table. It is not so bad down there (as long as there's enough dessert to go around), but they feel obliged to scale down their conversation to fit in better with their surrounding nieces and nephews, and they keep bumping their knees against the low table. They're just a mite out of their element.

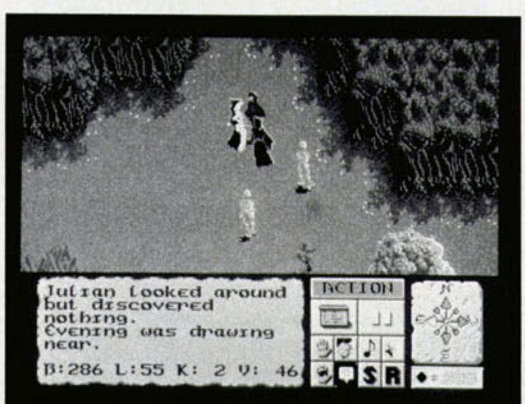
As consoles become more like computers, computer translations are, naturally, becoming more like sitting up with the grownups. Such is the case with two recent **Genesis** releases: *Faery Tale Adventure* and *Might & Magic: Gateway to Another World* (which is actually *Might & Magic II*), both converted by **New World Computing** and released by **Electronic Arts**.

They not only retain much of the flavor of the computer originals — both for better and for worse — but each has been subtly improved in terms of playability.

A Whale of a Tale (*Faery Tale Adventure*)

FTA's appearance is an especially happy event. This landmark game was quite unlike anything the computer gaming world had seen or heard when **Microillusions** released it for the Amiga in 1987, and its considerable charm and style are almost fully intact on the Genesis in 1991.

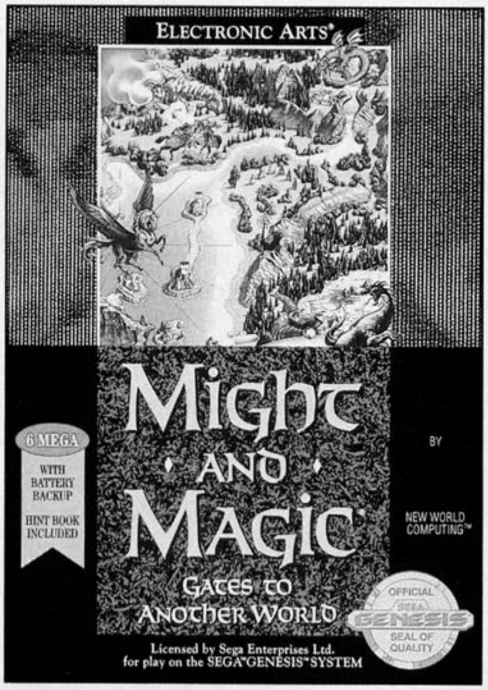
The heart and soul of the game is spectacular graphics and music, and these have been left virtually untouched. *FTA*'s vast continent of Holm — grasslands to mountains to tilled fields to forests to bosky village to paranoid city — is as lush as a well-watered lawn. (Only the people lack definition.) The player peers down from another one of those security-camera angles at one of three brothers searching the continent for his village's missing talisman, and one might as well be looking into one's own backyard. *FTA* has a happy, familiar tang to it right from the start. Oh, there's no place like Holm.



Size may have something to do with it. One could walk through this game for a half-hour or more and still not get to the original destination. Holm's hard-edged landscape scrolls smoothly in eight directions with only the slightest of pauses for loading, and it feels as though it goes on forever.

It's also a definite pleasure to find a game that emphasizes the joys of travel and that underplays combat (just seeing what there is to see and not trying to kill it first). To be sure, there is a good deal of fighting and the brothers three will die a lot during the early play sessions of the game, but this awkwardness is of decidedly short duration and small-scale, featuring four villains at a time, tops. (The principal requirement for a successful attack is simply staying on the same linear plane as one's opponent and, in defense, staying away from it.)

Another delight is the music. It contributes immeasurably to making Holm a *place*, not simply another cardboard cutout continent (which is, of course, ex-



actly what it is). The baroque themes by designer David Joiner — here credited by his on-line pseudonym, Talin — has been brought over largely intact from the Amiga version. Players will be humming the melodies long after they've stopped playing the game, and the contrasting motifs are as effective in creating a jaunty, on-the-road atmosphere or an in-danger-lemme-outta-here atmosphere as one would expect in a film score. In this respect, *FTA*, along with *Sword of Vermillion*, breaks new ground by offering something more than the standard "Music To Kill Creatures By" disco-thrash.

Moreover, New World has not simply left well enough alone, but has sought to correct problems in the original game in the conversion. The teleportation system in the original was complicated enough to be of questionable use. It relied upon the direction the character was facing within a circle of stones and, since nowhere in the game was the process described, success relied on blind luck and experimentation. Here, it's been reduced to a menu, with all destinations clearly stated, and the mammoth distances in the game have become far more manageable.

Indeed, there was little information of *any* kind in the original *FTA* and after a certain point, the game rather lost direction. Here, that information is available via a walkthrough in the documentation.

That is, at once, a blessing and a liability. It is lovely that players can finish the game, but the practice also tends to rob *FTA* of some of the pleasure of discovery (much as did the guidebooks accompanying the giant Genesis RPGs *Phantasy Star II* and *Sword of Vermillion*) and it is hardly an acceptable substitute for investing the game with enough information to permit its solution by the ordinarily industrious player. It couldn't have required any substantial recoding to put some of these clues into the mouths of a few additional roadside non-player characters.

Of course, one does not *have* to look at these hints and the manual *does* warn off the reader, but it is difficult *not* to look (they are not encrypted in any way). Indeed, players will eventually *have* to look since the clues contain information that can be found nowhere else in the game.

Unfortunately, some of the mechanics are a bit ill-considered. The characters still look as though they're conducting orchestras instead of swordfighting. The party is still able to kill monsters through fences, but no longer through stone walls, thank goodness. Yet the same ability is not conferred upon the enemy. The weapon button doubles as the trigger for bringing the second panel of a non-player character's speech. This means, sadly, that players will occasionally *murder* the voluble old men and beggars found beside the roads and give new meaning to the old saw about stabbing first and asking questions later.

Some elements of the game seem like discarded ideas that were neither fully fleshed out nor wholly removed. This means that role-players convinced that they *must* mean *something* may suffer mightily over such red herrings.

The save and restore mechanism is another sore point. One can do either operation quickly and efficiently at any point within the game *except* for combat or within the endgame. However, if a player desires to *resume* a saved game



at a later date, it requires the player to jot down a 36-character code.

Such codes are standard practice for games that don't use a battery backup, as *M&M* conveniently does. However, one has to wonder if this is necessary for a game which is not disk-based, since it is limited in the number of saved game possibilities and cannot be duplicated.

M&M in a "Shell"

Might & Magic, by contrast, will not win any awards for originality. It is a rather conventional three-dimensional basher, but it has never looked better or played more easily. The colors are luminous and vivid, the music unfailingly lively (though not quite in the same class as *FTA*'s) and the animations charming. It is also very, very large (it's stored on a six-megabit cart using something called "ultra-compression") and there is a great deal to do in the land of Cron (not the least of those things being to police one's six-character party's ever-increasing supply of loot, spells and skills in order to make sure everybody is healthy and well-fed).

Saving is more convenient than in *FTA*, but it is only possible when the party checks into an inn. (Shades of early *Wizardry*.) Moreover, the band splits up whenever the player saves or quits and must be reassembled when play is resumed. This means that changes in marching order will never survive those visits.

So, how's the gameplay? Sad to say, most of what one ends up doing is fighting, preparing for fighting or repairing after fighting. While this places *M&M* squarely in the console RPG mainstream, it also imparts a workmanlike quality to the game — that airless feeling that one is plugging ever larger numbers into an equation until its results exceed a hidden sum.

Now, a persuasive argument could be made that this rather depressing perspective is the nuts and bolts of most any RPG. However, the designer's task is to clothe the equation in story, puzzle, and character interaction, and the camouflage here seems more than usually transparent — for, however grand the scale, this is very much the same old sort of thing. *M&M* is populated with the usual crew of monsters who have nothing better to do with their Sunday afternoons than squat at this one particular dead end in an underground maze waiting to beat the tar out of the player's band of widowmakers. It is impossible to negotiate with them and it is impractical to try to run away from them consistently enough to make it a worthwhile tactic. To add insult to injury, there is no auto-combat. Players have to sit there and watch the combat results go by while the monster animations cycle tirelessly.

Now, there is a certain amount of fun to be had exploring any world as large as this one. It is easy enough to do so with the Genesis' controller, since the direction pad and fast loading give the game a pleasant, constant flow that one doesn't recall it having on computer. Yet, the ease of play and the game's mild beauties wear off after a time, and that peculiar airless feeling never does. This *M&M* doesn't melt anywhere — certainly not in the cartridge slot — and certainly not in the hearts and minds of gamers. **cgw**

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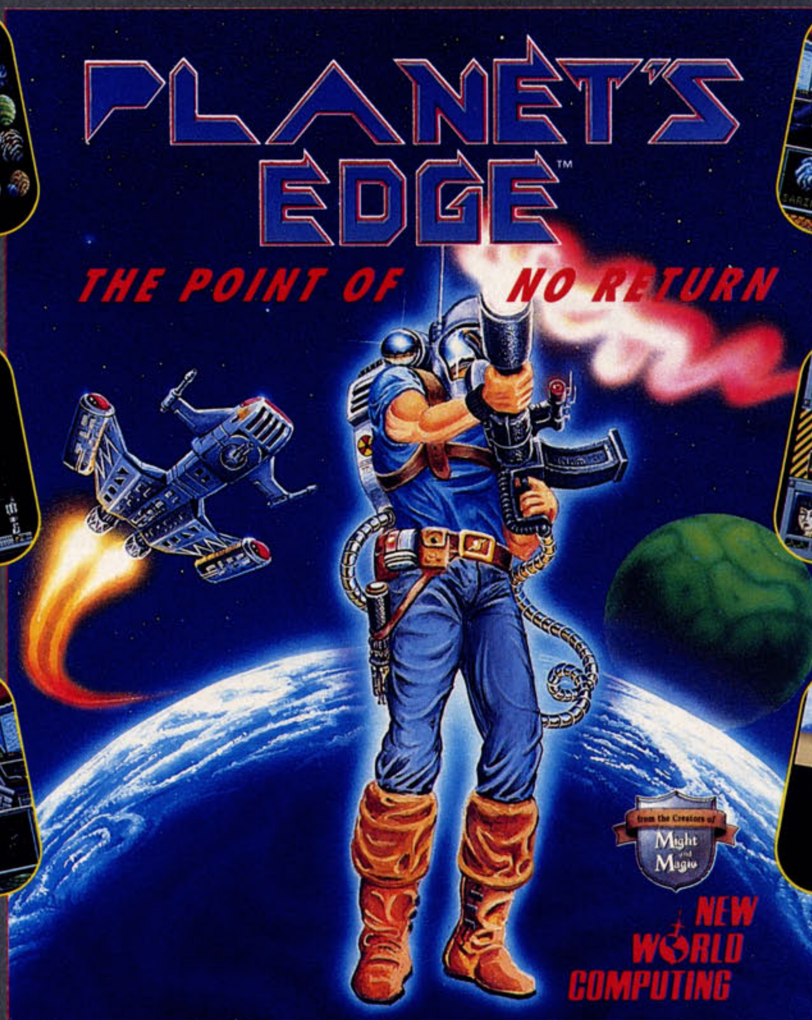
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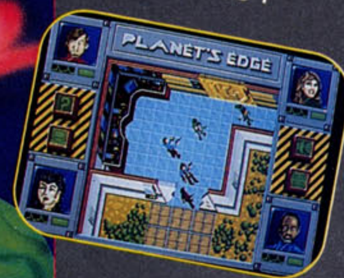


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Over There

Enhance Your "Hex" Life

by Paul Rigby

The UK software house **Impressions** obviously believes in burning the midnight crude, because they have a small bucketful of new releases crowding the shelves at this moment. Just released for the Amiga and ST is *Afrika Korps*. Designed by Ken Wright, *Afrika Korps* simulates the desert campaigns of World War II. Either side can be played and, in fact, separate disks are provided for each side and never the twain...



Afrika Korps

Up to six units comprise one division, combat units being reinforced from the strategic reserve. Each divisional commander is given orders, then those commanders interpret the orders according to their individual strengths and other variables including terrain. Based on the classic overhead design (from boardgames) using representative 'tokens' for individual units, *Afrika Korps* retails at £29.99.

Arnhem – The Market-Garden Operation, from the UK outfit **CCS** and designed by R.T. Smith (one of the UK's more successful wargame designers), is a one- to three-player re-creation of that infamous battle. In the three-player mode, one player is allocated the American forces while a second takes control of the British and Polish units. The map covers an area from the north of Arnhem to within the Belgian border. Scenarios include the march on Eindhoven, Operation Garden and Operation Market, with the "A Bridge Too Far" debacle forming the final episode. Available for the PC and Amiga now for £19.95.

Moving swiftly onwards... in fact, let's "Go" to the next product which is, after that quite inept link, *Go*, from UK software house, **Oxford Softworks**. Available on all formats for £24.99, *Go* is the old, old strategy puzzle game in which one must encircle unoccupied regions of the board with one's stones. To win, the player must simply own more regions than his opponent. Simple, that is, until it is played. However, such is the way with the majority of oriental strategy games with a 1000-year-old pedigree. This particular version of the old stager includes various levels of difficulty (from 0-100). In a similar method of play to many chess games, the higher the skill level, the longer the computer player takes to move. Other handy features include a handicap feature (less skilled players are given a head start with more stones on the board) and a hint feature, plus an option to move back and forward through previous moves, personalize names, the size of the board and save game preferences to disk for instant future use. Out now.

Napoleon I, from **Storm** in the UK, is a wargame that places the player in the position of commander-in-chief of the forces of either the Coalition or the French Empire. The game covers the campaigns between the Emperor Napoleon and the sovereigns of the other popular powers that took place in central Europe from 1805 to 1814. The screen display is in three parts: the menu line, the information window and the map window. The map depicts central Europe from Paris to east of Warsaw, from the North Sea to Italy. Terrain, rivers, sea, hills and mountain terrain are all depicted. Cities are interspersed throughout. Each set of units is colored to represent individual nations. The movement sequence is as follows: the weather is checked (affecting both movement and attrition); each city is scanned for ownership and supply; supply of each army and individual corps is then checked. The intelligence section is then utilized. Corps commanders check the condition of their forces; attempts are then made to reach a nearby army; morale is then scanned; administration is looked at including replacements based upon the economic strength of the nation; AI is then considered with orders in-


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cluding many variables (supply, objectives, contact modes); the army HQ then decides upon orders for each corps.

According to Storm: "The quick execution combat system of *Napoleon I* is based on the QJMA model introduced by Colonel Trevor Dupuy in the book *Numbers, Predictions and War*. From this formula came the relative strengths of the various unit types against each other, plus that of numbers, mobility, terrain, morale, training and leadership."

There is also a tactical battle system in order to conduct a miniatures battle. A tactical combat screen is then accessed, showing the battle map, menu bar and information area. As the play is in real time, orders are issued after interrupting play.

Campaigns include 1805, 1806-7, 1809 and 1813-14. ST and Amiga versions may be available now. A PC version is still in development.

Chaos in Andromeda is a new CRPG from **On-Line** a relatively new software house manned by a number of industry "vets" — and they have the scars to prove it! Produced, initially, for the Amiga with other version on the way (priced £24.99), *Chaos* asks the player to drop in on a strange planet to rescue an important scientist-type chappie. Character creation includes the usual old favorites, plus intuition and quickness, provided to spice the usual list of stats. Using a look-down viewpoint, one's character has metaphysical abilities, including many psychic powers (offensive and defensive). Three robots can also be controlled to aid the quest.

That's all for this month. Next month will see full details of an intriguing new "serious" civil flight simulator from German software house **Thalion** based upon the Airbus and designed with the extensive help of an active German civil pilot. Thalion has voiced their intentions to spread *ATP* in the general direction, allowing for excessive turbulence, of the four winds.

Also due to appear is a new wargame based upon the "Charge of the Light Brigade" plus (as the old saying goes) much, much more!

Incidentally, if any you would like to contact me, why not buzz me on CompuServe (75300,1503) or by mail to 20 Malvern Road, Liverpool, England, L6 6BW (please include an SAE if you would like a reply).

Note: The above games, and any of the other games mentioned in "Over There" in past issues, can be obtained from...

Computer Adventure World, 318 Kensington, Liverpool, England, L7 0EY. Telephone: 01144-51-263-6306.

Miles Better Software, 219/221 Cannock Road, Chadsmoor,

Cannock, Staffordshire, England, WS11 2DD
Telephone: 01144-543-466-577/8/80; Fax: 01144-543-466-579.

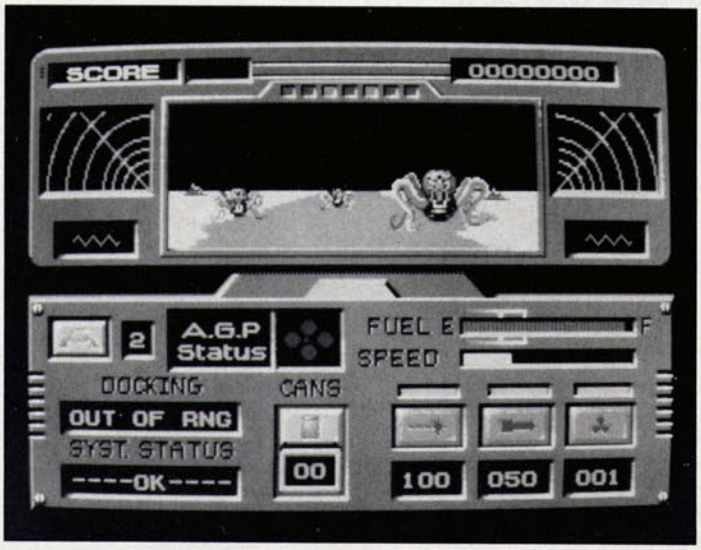
Premier Mail Order, Trybridge Ltd., 8 Buckwins sq., Burnt mills, Basildon, Essex, England, SS13 1BJ.
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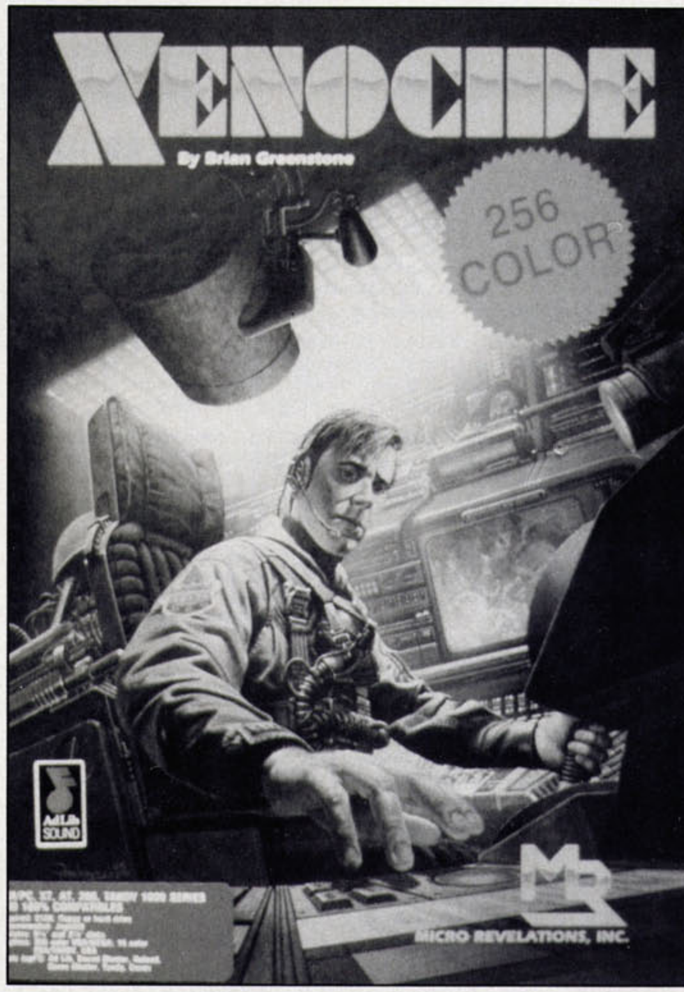
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The Good, The Bad Blood, and The Ugly

Micro Revelations' Xenocide

by Charles Ardai





TITLE:	Xenocide
SYSTEM:	IBM
PRICE:	$44.95
COPY PROTECT:	Documentation Look-Up
DESIGNER:	Brian Greenstone Brian Lent and Dave Triplett
PUBLISHER:	Micro Revelations

Orson Scott Card's new novel is titled *Xenocide*. It is a sequel to *Ender's Game* and *Speaker for the Dead* (both of which received science fiction's highest honors) and it is likely to win awards itself. In *Xenocide*, humanity faces a painful dilemma: in order to preserve our existence, we may have to eradicate an intelligent alien species. This is the meaning of the book's title — "Xenocide" is genocide of aliens, the extinguishing of an entire extraterrestrial race. It is a terrible act (though perhaps necessary) and a terrible decision to make; and far from making it lightly, Card's characters spend much of the novel deliberating and trying to find ways to avoid it.

Micro Revelations' new game of the same title is in no way connected to Card's novel, but the latter is brought up as a point of reference. The novel is a powerful one, sensitive to the ramifications of its premise and imaginitive in addressing complex moral issues. Card has selected a soul-rending problem to explore and he is up to the task.

With all due respect to Brian Greenstone, who has devised and programmed a very exciting action game, he is no Orson Scott Card. His treatment of the subject of xenocide in Micro Revelations' new game ranges from the insensitive to the propagandistic and the bloodthirsty, exemplified by the ghoulish war cry, "Lock and load, it's time to commit Xenocide!" The scenario he presents, and which he has players enact, is simply repugnant.

Give No Quarter

This is probably more of a reflection on the callousness of the game's publisher rather than on the game itself. Although the game explores familiar territory, it *is* a fine game. *Xenocide* is, in fact, so much a colorful and well-crafted arcade game that one lacks only cigarette burns and a slot for quarters on one's computer to complete the illusion. The familiar territory mentioned above is as old as such games as *Scramble* and *Vanguard*, with bits of *Moonsweeper* and *Gauntlet* thrown in for good measure. There are three different viewpoints (first-person, side, and overhead) in four different levels on each of three alien-infested moons — twelve game sequences in all, after which the human colony on "Argenia" is considered saved.

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The first sequence has one piloting a hovercraft over a moon's surface, collecting ammunition cannisters, avoiding or destroying obstacles and, finally, docking at the entrance to Level Two. This is the first-person sequence, with events viewed through the front windshield of the hovercraft; a nice "atmospheric" element is that collisions with giant alien bugs leave splattered blood on the windshield, obscuring one's vision.

The next two sequences offer *Scramble*-style side views as one first flies and then swims through caverns measureless to man, collecting bombs for the final assault, opening doors with keys, and blasting baddies. The best thing about these scenes is that they are big, with lots to do and a variety of menaces to face. The worst thing about them is that they are as old hat as an Easter bonnet, enlivened by only a single innovation: special weapons and defenses are acquired by running into glowing balls, with each collision cycling a highlight through a menu of "Options" such as "Flesh Freeze" (which freezes all enemies on the screen) and "Mega-Shield" (which strengthens one's shields). One has to collide with the right number of balls to highlight the Option one wants, and then activate it before colliding again. Of course, video game players have even seen these features before.

Last, but not least, the player has to navigate the aliens' underground laboratory, planting bombs in nuclear receptacles and then teleporting out before the explosion destroys the lab, the aliens, and the moon itself. This is the top-down segment of the game and easily the most entertaining. Here, one's laser beams ricochet off the walls, one's weapons include land mines and a flame thrower and one's enemies are legion. A partial map of one moon's laboratory is included with the game; for the others, players are on their own.

There are further complications, of course, adding strategic possibilities to the game and making the action that much more frenzied. There are time limits as well as limits of other sorts — only one option can be active at a time, for instance. There is even a rudimentary Save/Restore feature, though it allows only a single Save position, which gets updated automatically after each level is cleared and wiped each time a new game is started.

In typical arcade game fashion, there is plenty that makes no sense. Why are there convenient refueling stations scattered around the alien environment which the player can use with impunity? Why doesn't destroying a planet's three moons damage the planet? These questions have no answers. One may as well ask why Elmer Fudd can (sometimes) walk on air.

The graphics and sound recall nothing so much as the glory days of the Atari 800 and the Colecovision. Whether this is a good or a bad thing depends largely on one's taste for nostalgia. All in all, *Xenocide* is a strong, hardcore arcade game for meat-and-potatoes gamers and a treat for gamers who get misty-eyed when they remember their first time on the coin-op game *Defender*.

Taking Cides

Whatever one thinks of the game, however, the story that goes along with it is morally reprehensible. Undoubtedly, there will be gamers who enjoy it — but that's what worries this reviewer. Mass murder, whether xeno- or geno-, is no laughing matter. Its presentation in *Xenocide* is gleeful, thoughtless and irresponsible.

The aliens are described as reptilian and, like the reptile aliens of the TV series "V," they like to dine on human flesh. They are invading; peaceful negotiations have been spurned and now the only hope for human survival is war. That's good enough for this reviewer — whoever wrote the manual should have stopped there.

He didn't. It is not war that the instruction manual calls for, but xenocide. It is not enough to halt the *invasion* — every single one of the aliens must be killed. No thought is given to the possibility of divided factions or rebels among the aliens. (Even "V," congeries of cliches that it was, gave lip service to that possibility.) The game's draconian policy would not even spare the proverbial single righteous Sodomite.

There never has been and never will be an intelligent race, whether human or alien, deserving of utter annihilation. Any call for such an extreme act is inherently suspect; an insistent, zealous call such as this game presents doubly so.

At its worst, the game's documentation sounds like fascist propaganda. It is as though a position paper had accompanied *Space Invaders* warning that if the aliens were allowed to land they would start marrying our daughters — ugly and gratuitous.

No one forced Micro Revelations to call the game *Xenocide* or to provide anything but a throwaway one-paragraph back-story to set up the action. They *chose* to come up with the marketing angle they did and, without imputing sinister motives, one has to wonder why.

Encouraging players to take pleasure in indiscriminate killing can have no good end. One need not call for censorship, claim lasting harm to players or even direct people away from this game — *Xenocide* is quite enjoyable as a game and deserves to be played — but one can certainly register disapproval of the game's fiction and do oneself a favor by ignoring pages two and three of the manual and leaving of them unread. **CGW**

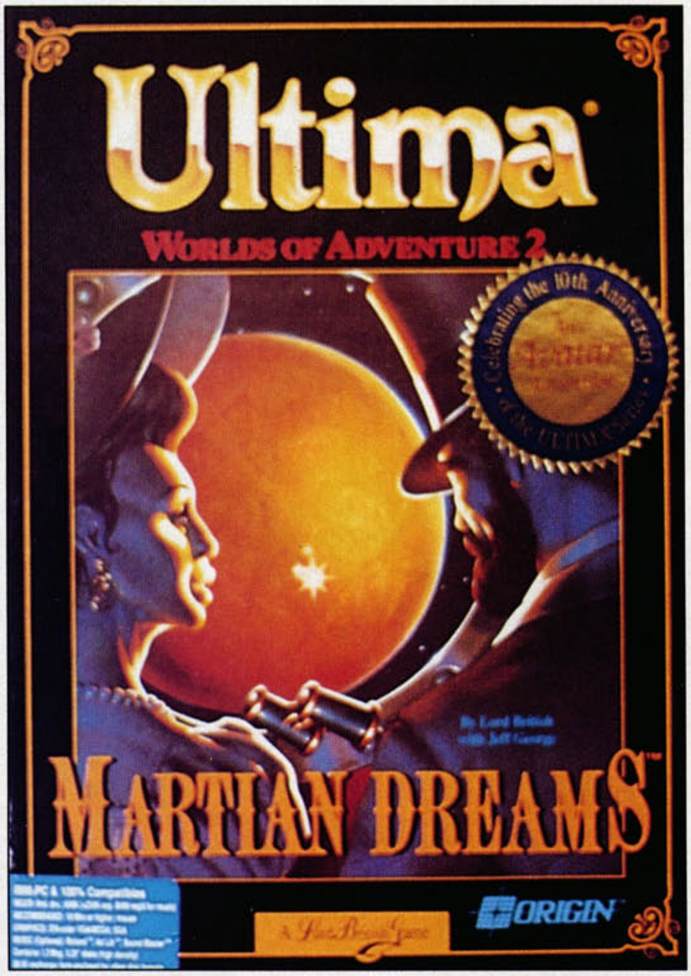

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The Angry Red Planet

A Review of Origin's Martian Dreams

by Roger Stewart

TITLE:	Martian Dreams
SYSTEM:	IBM w/ EGA/VGA
COPY PROTECT:	None
DESIGNERS:	Warren Spector and Jeff George
PUBLISHER:	Origin Systems Austin, TX



M*artian Dreams*, the second game in the Ultima Worlds of Adventure series, is decidedly larger in scope than its predecessor, *The Savage Empire*. *Dreams* is an epic adventure of rescue and resurrection that has all the depth and complexity of the Ultima series. In addition to its entertainment value, the game's creators even manage to slip in a healthy dose of history. (Watch out, Carmen Sandiego!) Using the versatile interface developed by Richard Garriott for *Ultima VI*, *Martian Dreams* manages to be accessible to even a relative newcomer while sacrificing nothing in quality of play.

Set the Wayback Machine...

The year is 1893. The place is Chicago, near the shores of Lake Michigan. Out on the water floats a full-sized replica of the Santa Maria. We are at the World's Columbian Exposition, celebrating the 400th anniversary of Christopher Columbus' discovery of America.

To look around, though, one might not at first realize that this is America. The huge, white Neoclassical buildings that have given the fair its nickname, the "White City," might well belong to Athens or Rome. Down side streets off the Midway, a visitor may catch glimpses of China, Morocco, Turkey and other distant lands. Those of adventurous spirit and prurient tastes (is there a gleam in gentle reader's eye?) may choose to explore the infamous Street of Cairo, where exotic Egyptian women demonstrate the "genuine native muscle dance."

What sights the eye may behold! An elephant made of walnuts, the "Moving Sidewalk," the Golden Door of Louis Sullivan's Transportation Building, balloon rides, trained animals, and... machines! Though the novelist Thomas Love Peacock referred to the Victorians as the "gas-enlightened race," we are far enough along that electricity is coming into use. Indeed, electricity is everywhere at the Exposition, running the machines, great and loud! And the greatest, most eye-popping machine of all is the wheel built by G.W.G. Ferris of Pittsburgh, PA. This, the mother of all Ferris Wheels, is 250 feet in diameter, and each of its 36 cars can hold 40 passengers.

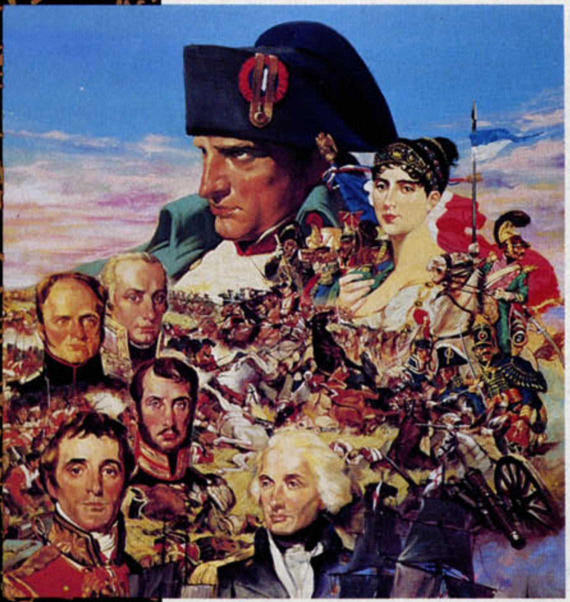
A Secret History

The creators of **Origin**'s *Martian Dreams* tell us, however, that the Columbian Exposition of 1893 held a marvel even greater than the fabulous Ferris Wheel. The space cannon, forgotten to history until now, was capable of firing into the aether between planets a capsule the size of a railroad car. The cannon derived its tremendous power from Phlogistonite, an explosive substance discovered by the astronomer Percival Lowell. In the game's opening sequence, we see the space cannon discharged ahead of schedule by what appears to be the hand of a saboteur.[1]

As fate would have it, an astounding number of the Victorian era's leading figures were aboard when the unscheduled firing occurred. Newspaperman William Randolph Hearst, filmmaker Georges Melies, inventor Thomas Edison, novelists Mark Twain and H.G. Wells, frontier woman Calamity Jane, physicist Marie Curie and horticulturist George Washington Carver were just a few of the luminaries among the group who made the trip to the Red Planet. Percival Lowell himself headed the expedition.

When the game's opening sequence has passed, the wise player will select Run Introduction from the menu. Taking up after the events recounted in *The Savage Empire*, Dr. Johann Spector tells us how he and the Avatar were contacted by the eccentric genius, Nikola Tesla[2]. History records (see the Encyclopedia Britannia) that Tesla believed he was receiving signals from another planet at his laboratory in Colorado. Realizing the signals to be a distress call from the survivors of the 1893 expedition — now marooned on Mars — Tesla assembles a team of would-be rescuers that includes himself, newspaperwoman Nellie Bly[3], psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud, and a specialist in oxygen remedies who calls himself Dr. C.L. Blood[4]. The team is rounded out by Spector and the Avatar, who have been summoned from

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NES screen shot shown



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***NES Version**: 4 megabit cartridge, MMC-5 microchip 256K RAM, Battery back-up*

(Release Dates: 9/91 PC/Comp., 11/91 Amiga, 8/91 NES)

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the future. (Spector is, of course, obviously a fictional creation who bears no resemblance to any real person, living or dead.)

Under the Moons of Mars

As the game begins, the 1895 rescue team has landed (at coordinates 28 South, 146 East) on the surface of Mars in Tesla's capsule. All has gone according to plan, save for one small detail: the cabin door has been jammed shut by the impact. The Avatar must borrow a prybar from Tesla's cowboy bodyguard, Garrett, and use it to open the hatch. Tesla will ask an irritating question at this point, necessitating that the Avatar perform the action twice to be successful.

Before disembarking, the intrepid explorers would do well to provision themselves with tools, camping gear, weapons, ammunition and navigational aids (all of which were thoughtfully stowed in the ship's hold). Dr. Blood will begin preparing his oxygenated air cartridges to provide relief in case the Avatar succumbs to the planet's harsh conditions. Assuming Tesla's calculations to be correct, the party will head east to find the 1893 capsule. They will carry lots of warm clothing because the nights on Mars can be deadly cold.

Members of the expedition should have their weapons ready at all times when crossing the Martian plains. The native "plantimals" are, more often than not, distinctly unfriendly. The Avatar seems to be the only member of the expedition sufficiently trained in the use of weapons to be able to control the Belgian combine that was stowed aboard the ship. Dr. Spector, while never especially handy in a fight, has a distinct preference for elephant guns. (Dr. Freud may well shake his head at this.) Everyone else seems to do best with a pistol in each hand. Some clothing, such as helmets, gloves and boots, will serve as protection against attacks. While much of the opening game consists of learning to survive, the explorers will eventually find ways to bypass some of the planet's inhospitable surface.



Eastern exploration will eventually lead the team to the site of the 1893 landing, where Lt. Dibbs stands guard over the original space capsule. Years of relative isolation have loosened Dibbs' lips so that he is a veritable fountain of information as he rattles on and on about one subject after another. In addition to his value as a source of information, the loquacious Dibbs is a good man to have around in a fight. He should be added to the rescue team as they search the 1893 capsule for more supplies.

Among other things, the explorers will learn from Dibbs that those enterprising Americans, Calamity Jane and Buffalo Bill, have set up a trading post somewhat to the north and further east. For humans, the most valuable medium of exchange on Mars is "oxium," which can be found, among other places, in the abandoned dwellings of Martian cities and on scalable plateaus. Oxium is a gelatinous blue substance that, when chewed, releases oxygen into the bloodstream. Without it, no one can long survive in the thin Martian air.

Jane and Bill have berries for sale at the trading post. These aren't food, however. The purple, green, and brown berries confer upon the user various kinds of telekinetic and extrasensory powers. (Blue berries have their uses too, but skip the red berries that grow in various parts of the planet). The traders also have a supplier of oxium named Cooter McGee. Cooter has disappeared, so the intrepid explorers strike out to the east, once again, in search of Cooter's cave in the mazelike canyons of the Noctis Labyrinthus. The telekinetic powers conferred by the berries will prove useful in freeing Cooter from his prison. In return, Cooter will tell the explorers how to find a map to the motherlode of oxium.

The map will also lead to even greater things: the power stations that run the machines of the ancient Martians. Those big levers the rescue party has encountered sticking out of the ground are just waiting for the power stations to be activated. The canals, too, are waiting — to be filled once again with water melted from polar ice! But first, someone must be found who knows how to repair the conveyor belt that carries coal to the furnaces.

Green Dreams

This reviewer would do the reader a disservice were he to reveal much beyond this point. The story opens out in ways that are both unexpected and marvelous. Potential Martian dreamers will not want to have these surprises ruined by journalistic indiscretions. Suffice it to say that what appears in the beginning to be a straightforward rescue mission turns out to have far greater scope and significance. Winning the game is much more than a matter of rounding up a few stray Victorians and building a space cannon.

Along the way, the player will learn much about the ancient Martian race. Furthermore, the appropriateness of having the author of *The Interpretation of Dreams* on the rescue team will become clear. And while it may not always be strictly necessary, the player should always talk to the Victorian figures to learn more about their lives. The game provides a wealth of historical and biographical background.

The story of *Martian Dreams* was originally conceived by Warren Spector. It was further developed with input from Lord British (Richard Garriott) who set the restriction that the outcome of the game could not contradict history as we know it. The project was eventually handed over to director Jeff George, who shaped the story into his own vision. The surface and features of Mars are the work of Origin's master world builder, Phil Brogden, while the whimsically clever plantimals are the work of artist Jeff Dee. Kudos go to everyone involved in the development of this outstanding game project.

Be warned that one may have to make a boot disk to free up memory (instructions for doing so are even included with the documentation). The game requires 570K of free RAM to run with VGA graphics and 575K for EGA. (If the mouse isn't compatible, one can toggle between windows using the Tab key). There is no CGA version of the game. In fact, Origin is moving in the direction of requiring VGA and 2MB of memory as a minimum configuration for running the games. Like H.G. Wells' Martians when they gazed upon the Earth, the intellects at Origin Systems are "vast, cool and unsympathetic" toward older and lesser computers.

A final hint: unlike terrestrial mirrors, Martian mirrors do not reflect the surface of things. Instead, they reveal the inner reality

of anyone who stands before them. It never hurts to know who your friends are.

Footnotes

1. Perhaps it was this "accidental" discharge of the space cannon that caused the fire that is known to have destroyed part of the Exposition in the summer of 1893 and may have destroyed the cannon itself.

2. Westinghouse used Tesla's alternating-current method to light the Columbian Exposition. Tesla believed electrical power could be broadcast from towers, much like the strange constructions found on Mars.

3. Elizabeth Cochran(e), an early feminist and reporter for Joseph Pulitzer's New York World, took her pen name, Nellie Bly, from a popular song of the day.

4. Blood was an actual, though little-known, historical figure whose "remedies," which included "oxygenated air," were reviled by his orthodox colleagues in the medical profession.

A Brief Bibliography of Science Fiction Set in the Victorian Era

The scholarly people at **Origin Systems** have included in the documentation an extensive bibliography of sources that were used in researching the world of *Martian Dreams*. The interested player may turn to those sources to learn more about Nikola Tesla, Nellie Bly, the Columbian Exposition, and every other subject touched upon in the game. For those who would find their enjoyment of the game enhanced by reading fiction that touches upon the era or the setting of Martian Dreams, the following suggestions are offered:

The War of the Worlds, H.G. Wells (1898). In this classic invasion-from-space novel, Victorian England is helpless before the might of the Martian war machines.

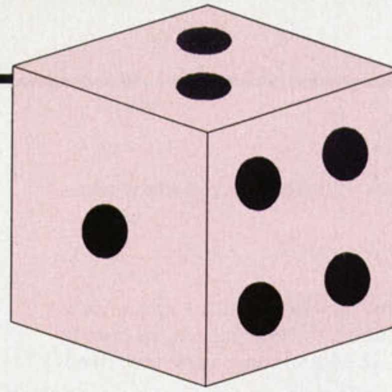
The First Men in the Moon, H.G. Wells (1901). Roles reversed; the Selenites find their world threatened by potentially dangerous visitors from Earth.

The Lost World, A. Conan Doyle (1912). A group of upstanding British gentlemen do battle with dinosaurs and cavemen in this ripping yarn set in the Amazon basin.

A Princess of Mars, Edgar Rice Burroughs (1917). The greatest of all Martian dreamers, Burroughs never let petty scientific facts stand in the way of the rich pageant of his imagination. This book was the first of a twelve-volume series about John Carter of Mars.

From The Earth To The Moon, Jules Verne (1865). This book described a trip from the earth to the moon which Verne conceived of being exactly 97 hours and 20 minutes in duration. In 1870, the book was republished with a sequel, *And A Trip Around It*.

The Difference Engine, William Gibson and Bruce Sterling (1991). This contemporary novel asks the question, "What if Victorian England had had computers," and provides the answer: steam-driven cyberpunk! **CGW**



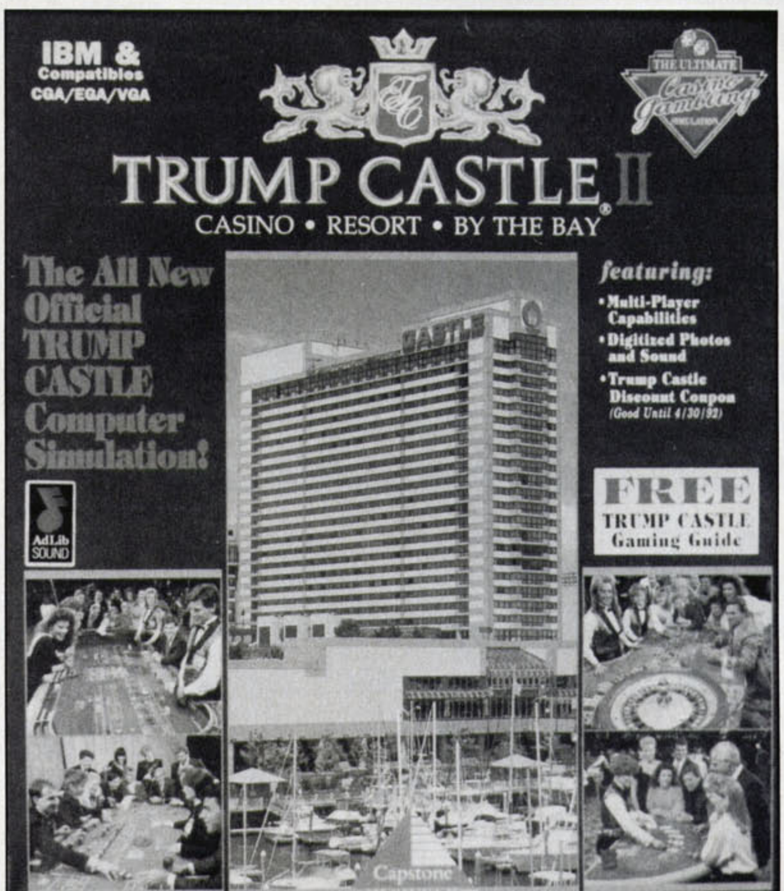
Betting With the Shooter

Capstone's Trump Castle II

by Michael S. Lasky

TITLE:	Trump Castle II
SYSTEM:	IBM with 512K (CGA, EGA, Tandy 1000) IBM with 640K (VGA)
PRICE:	$49.95
COPY PROTECT:	Documentation Look-Up
PUBLISHER:	Capstone Entertainment Miami, FL





Donald Trump's flashy, splashy Trump Castle was the premier hotel casino in Atlantic City, New Jersey until Taj Mahal Hotel Casino, another of Trump's pleasure palaces, opened. *Trump Castle II* is to **Capstone**'s *Ultimate Gambling Simulation* what the "Taj" was to the "Castle" — a highly improved version of the original. What *Trump Castle II* offers is a versatile computer-simulated collection of the "Big Six" games of chance one would expect to find in either casino: Baccarat, Blackjack, Craps, Roulette, Video Poker and Slots. Ostensibly, the computer versions follow the same rules found in the actual gaming halls.

What the package actually deals out in this product with five loaded 360K 5.25" disks is one giant slick advertisement for Trump Castle that *happens* to have games as well. Included in the package are a Trump Castle $20 discount coupon for a stay at the hotel and a *Trump Castle Gaming Guide* that doubles as the "key" for the elaborate and annoying copy protection scheme.

Players navigate the game starting from the lobby of the hotel. A point-and-click interface escorts players to any of the six gaming spots (i.e. slots, roulette, etc) or into the west and east hallways (which offer digitized photos of the various parts of the hotel). The photos allow one to vicariously journey into a hotel suite, peek at the pool and the health club or go to the bar, the restaurant and the nightclub. In each location, there are a number of places to point, click and watch a character say something via comic strip-type balloons that pop up on the screen. These comments are always inane and often sexist. After one tour of the hotel facilities, the casino is the only place most players will ever want to go again.

Note also that the digitized photos are not visible in CGA mode. Even in EGA graphics mode, they appear as surreal, almost psychedelic, images. A gamer will need a full 640K of RAM in order to view the digitized photos. Also, without the optional Ad Lib or Sound Blaster cards, no special sound effects or voices are heard. Further, in order to get the program to work in VGA mode, which does offer the best images, most gamers will have to begin with a vanilla computer (i.e. booted with a DOS disk from drive A). Otherwise, the EGA mode is the default.

Each casino game allows up to four

players, and various table minimum/maximum bets can be made using either function keys or mouse clicks. Graphic representation of the actual games varies. The digitized table games, such as Blackjack and Craps, are uncannily true to form. Slots and Video Poker are less so.

As for the odds, one can only say that, "If Trump Castle in Atlantic City operated like this game, they would have only one-time visitors." The slots games offer poor to lousy payoffs, which vary depending on the amount bet. Video Poker is much the same: the player wins one and loses one, never really gaining much or losing much. This reviewer played one round for half an hour and came out with *exactly* the same amount of money that he started with.

Also, if anyone playing in CGA mode who happens to go bankrupt will find that they are *automatically* given another $1,000. This no-loser-approach certainly takes the fun out of multi-player competition. At least in the higher graphics mode play, the player must return to the lobby, go to the cashier, click three times, while saying "There is no play like Trump Castle" and *then* is rewarded with another $1,000.

Card games such as 21 start with a digitized set of dealers shuffling and dealing the cards. They look real enough, but the sound! The sound of the shuffling is a cross between a dungeon in *Castle Dracula* and someone installing snow chains on tires.

Blackjack is the best game in this package but is not without flaws. The dealer offers insurance when the house card shown is an ace. Only those players who insure their hands win if the dealer actually has 21. If the house has 21, the dealer must show it and the round is over. *TC2* allows players to continue *even* when the dealer has 21 and there is no way to win.

Roulette is the game to play in order to make money. In almost every round played by this writer, the winning number was from the first row (1-34). 34 red came up three times in a row, as did 7 red. When betting anew, the player must remember to clear the field because the cursor defaults to the zero. This reviewer inadvertently placed bets on zero a number of times before realizing what was happening.

Player controls for betting, dealing and decision-making are all built around function keys and Alt-letter combinations. A mouse, however, makes for smoother and quicker action.

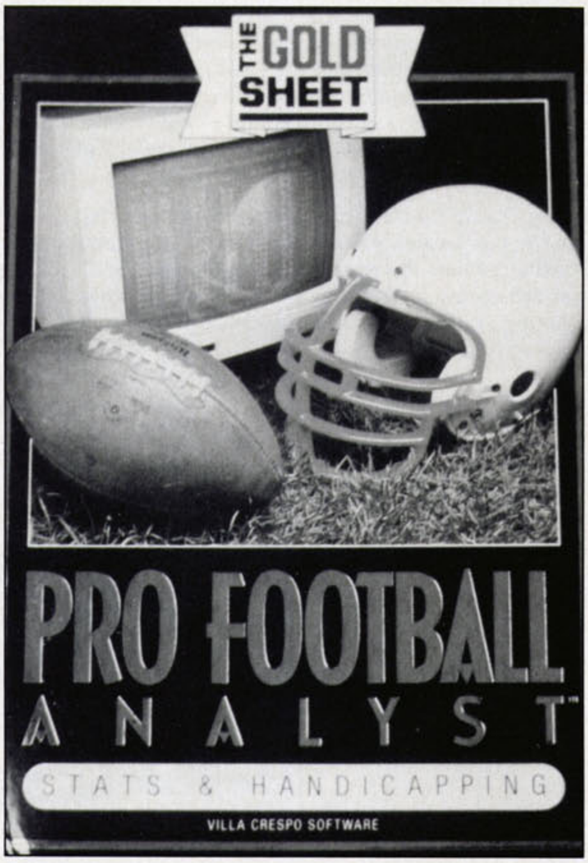
If it is possible to get beyond the gimmicky and brazen advertisements in the lobby, *Trump Castle II* offers a modicum of casino fun without any risk of losing one's shirt. Indeed, the multi-player function, together with the save game feature, enhances this package. For players contemplating a trip to a real casino, this is an innocuous way to learn one's way around the gaming floor. For experienced gamblers, *Trump Castle II* will probably not offer the same stimulation that real play does.

Exiting Trump Castle, players descend the moving escalator where the bus awaits. As one is driven off, a panoramic view of the castle reminds the gamer that the "trump card" of this game is that this casino is like any other: it exists to make money and that, to get yours, it pays to advertise. **CGW**

The Midas Touch

The Gold Sheet Pro Football Analyst

by Bill Brown and Wyatt Lee



TITLE:	The Gold Sheet: Pro Football Analyst
SYSTEM:	IBM
PRICE:	$59.95
COPY PROTECT:	Non-Repro Look-Up
DESIGNERS:	MicroBrothers
PUBLISHER:	Villa Crespo Software Highland Park, IL

When one works late hours, one occasionally uses the talk shows on late night radio as a constant companion on the long trek homeward. This is true for this gamer and often means that he ends up playing radio roulette on the homeward route. On occasion, he has picked up a Las Vegas radio station with several programs on sports betting. Not being a sports bettor himself, one would think that he would hit the tuner and move on. Instead, he has repeatedly listened with fascination to the detailed number-crunching and statistical analyses that handicappers use to "set lines" and determine their plays.

As a casual sports fan, he would probably never have thought about comparing "points per hundred yards" with "total yardage" and a thousand other formulae that the professional handicappers use to prepare for upcoming games. He also was amazed to find out how good some of those radio handicappers were. Yet, no matter how good the professionals are, everyone thinks he has a better system. This writer kept thinking, "There's no reason to have that statistic in there" and "That's stupid!" Yet, he had never bothered to create a database and had no intention of chasing down the numbers necessary to test his own system. That is, until *The Gold Sheet: Pro Football Analyst* came along. With *The Gold Sheet*, he could test his handicapping skill *without* risking his wallet.

A Gambler's Perspective (from Bill Brown)

Bill Brown is the editor and publisher of The Western Gambler, *a Las Vegas-based publication. He is a noted author and recognized expert in the use of computers in gambling.*

The typical gambler spends hundreds of hours searching through stacks of papers and piles of books — sorting, compiling and analyzing — looking for the magic formula to "beat" professional football. Many have long since given up the quest because the time spent never produced the rewards they were looking for. Now, the introduction of computers to sports handicapping allows bettors to access valuable databases and obtain statistics useful to the goal.

The Gold Sheet: Pro Football Analyst provides two full seasons of statistics, as well as an optional *Statdisk* (data on every team since 1983), the opportunity to download statistical updates from **Villa Crespo**'s own BBS on a weekly basis (this is a free service for the first year and $24.95 per year thereafter) or the tried and true possibility of receiving updates every three weeks in hard copy by U.S. Mail (for the same $24.95). Naturally, the database would be of little value to anyone without a method to access and manipulate its records. What this product does that no other software which has come to our attention has ever done before is to allow the user to create his own handicapping formula by manipulating 28 different offensive and defensive statistics. By assigning a percentage to any or all of these statistics, one creates a formula. The program massages the data and tells the player how he/she would have done over the course of: a) all historical data, b) last season, c) season to date or d) a rolling average of the latest four weeks of data.

Players who wish to concentrate on a particular team can use the "Trend Analysis" feature to set parameters for predicting the performance of that specific team. One can determine whether

all opponents are important or simply those in conference, out of conference, in division or on Monday night. It is possible to factor in stadium type, game situation (after winning, after losing, after a Monday night game), favorite status and win-loss record against the spread or straight up. One can even concentrate on a specific match-up, isolating on the win-loss history of categories which are specific to that game, including the win-loss record in the type of stadium and type of turf.

Once one is through creating or massaging his formulae, the program runs the data through the formulae and presents the customized predictions in several ways: straight up, against the spread, a ranking as to the prediction's usefulness in office pool selections, over/under calculation and detailed predictions for a single-game matchup. These can be displayed on-screen or printed out for future reference.

This reviewer found that once he learned how to create a formula and apply it to past and present games, he just couldn't walk away from the computer without trying to finesse the formula just a little bit more. Fortunately, it can take less than a minute to adjust one's formula and test it on the data available. As a gambler, programmer and editor and columnist for gambling publications, this reviewer contends that the flexibility and power of *The Gold Sheet Pro Football Analyst* is unmatched by any other football software on the market. Its only drawback is its addictiveness.

The Gamer's Perspective (Wyatt Lee)

Even people who don't like to bet on sporting events can get a lot of value out of *The Gold Sheet: Pro Football Analyst*. Those who risk nothing to try to win free connect time in the sports pools on **GEnie** or the **USA Today Sports Network** may want to let the program pick their choices each week; those who want to make sure they have the right statistical fit for their style in a computerized football league may want to use *The Gold Sheet* to crunch numbers before selecting their team and those who simply want to amaze their friends by prognosticating either the entire weekend's games or one particular game may want to print out the predictions of *The Gold Sheet*.

Some would suggest that *The Gold Sheet* was not designed as a "game," yet this reviewer just can't stop playing it. The program comes with four expert formulae saved to disk. Users (dare they be called "gamers?") can save plenty more of their customized formulae to disk, as well. What this means is that one can keep trying to beat the experts. One can even have friends design their systems and have the program run their custom formulae through the database. It is yet another way to determine who knows the most about football (and doesn't even require gamers to wait until the season starts to begin challenging each other's unique formulae).

To be sure, *The Gold Sheet: Pro Football Analyst* is not a game, but this writer certainly felt like a Las Vegas radio personality when he finished analyzing last weekend's games. 61% accuracy may not be that good on **GEnie**, but it sure beats the 38% scored by one of the on-disk "experts." Anyone serious about sports and addicted to statistics will certainly want to be aware of *The Gold Sheet*. **cgw**

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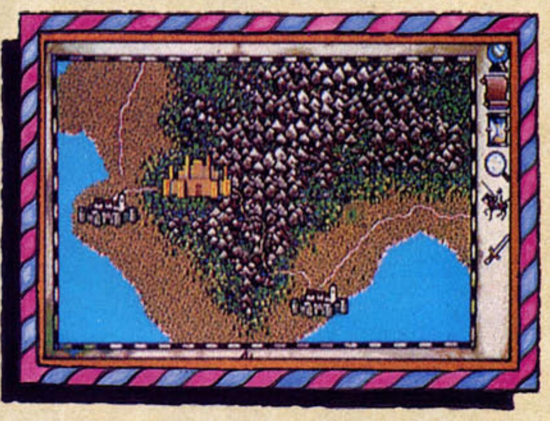
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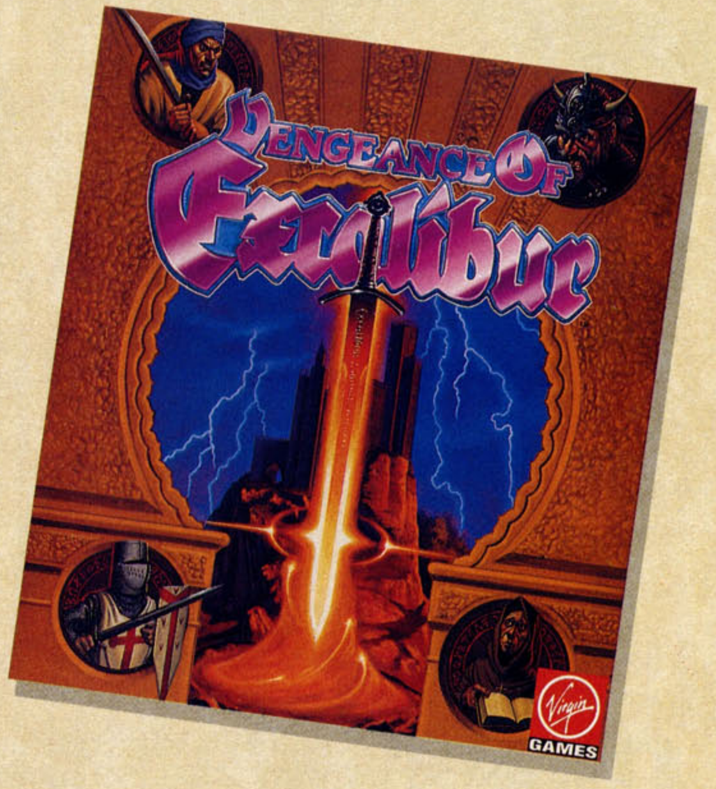
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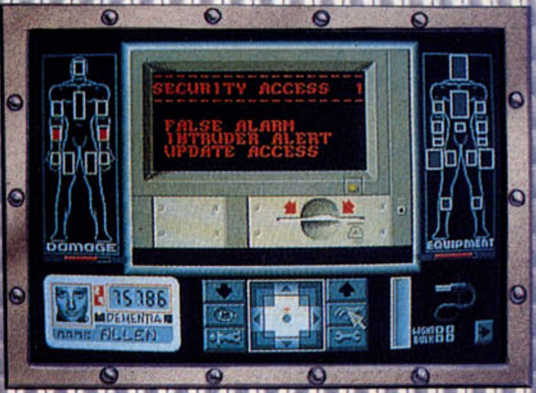
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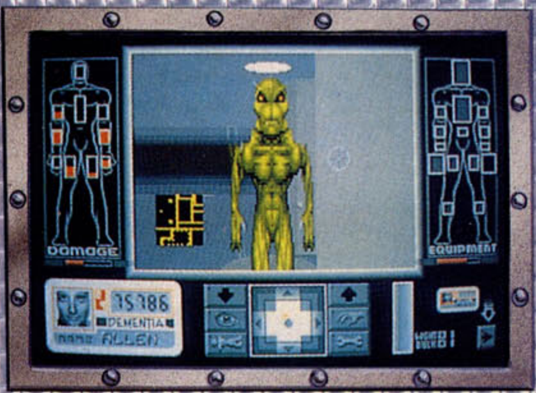


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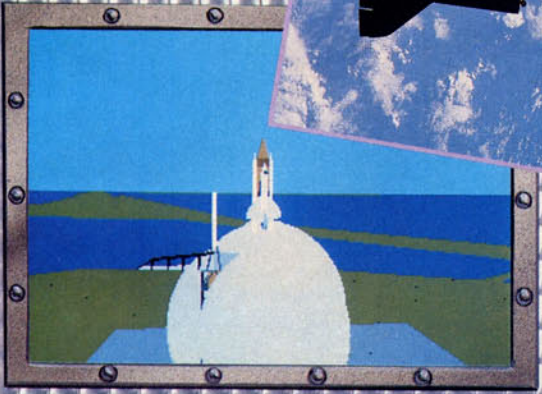
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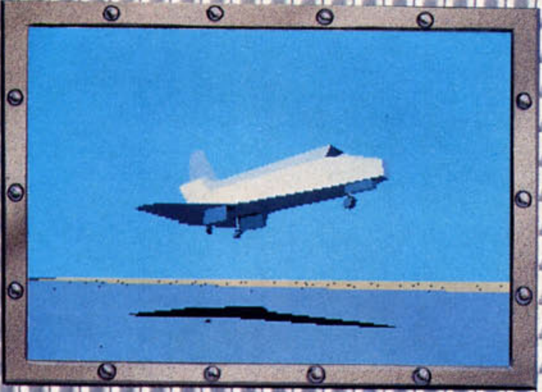
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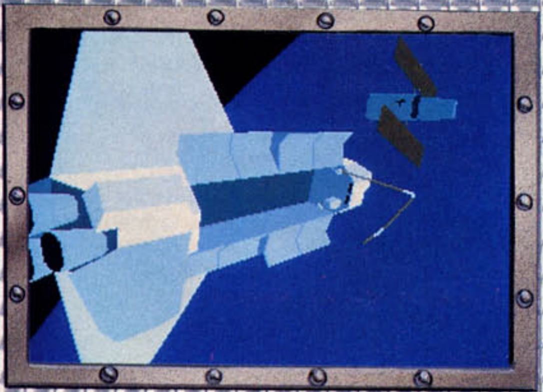
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Circle Reader Service #75

Saving the World Through Mass Destruction

Psygnosis' Armour-Geddon

by Derek Godat

TITLE:	Armour-Geddon
SYSTEMS:	Amiga, IBM, Atari ST
PRICE:	$49.99
# PLAYERS:	One or Two (serial link)
COPY PROTECT:	None
DESIGNERS:	Paul Hunter, Ed Scio
PUBLISHER:	Psygnosis Brookline, MA

Until recent months, Liverpool-based **Psygnosis Software** has remained a "quiet" company to most American consumers. Despite many successes, the software house has never been widely acclaimed outside of Europe. Psygnosis' trademark style, a fusion of exotic art, atmospheric techno-rock and thumb-numbing action, has met with mixed results on these shores. The fast action, joystick-jerking crowd devour the games, spit out the bones and then clamor for more. On the other hand, armchair pilots and deck-punching wargamers have been disappointed with the hot graphics, hot sound, "instant gratification" formula used by Psygnosis. In a classic case of form versus substance, hard-core strategists would virtually all agree that all flash and no depth had made Psygnosis a "dull" publisher.

Whatever the case, Psygnosis is taking long strides to please gamers of all "creeds" and "colors." Their '91 lineup has expanded to include not only Psygnosis' signature shoot-'em-ups, but wargames, role-playing adventures, puzzlers and even *Armour-Geddon*, a first entry into the bloody and brutal "pure" simulation arena.

Same Sighted, Sank Sim

It goes without saying; the simulation side of gaming has been extraordinarily ripe for some time now. Any disk-flipping Joe with his eyes in the usual place can see the hordes of new sims battling for shelf space these days. As a game-playing public, we've seen sailboat simulators, UFO simulators, even dragon-flying simulators! If it's even *remotely* marketable, it's been "simmed."

So what can *Armour-Geddon* possibly offer that a dozen other sims cannot?

It certainly isn't plot. Sadly, for all the flashy technology that a game can flaunt, storylines still date back to the early Atari days of hack and blast. Luckily, there's no wizard-slaying or girlfriend-rescuing to be found here. In *Armour-Geddon*, as in a hundred other titles, terrorists have gotten their claws on some hot new weaponry. As is typical of their lot, these bloodthirsty baddies intend to deep-fry the Earth. While decent citizens crisp on the planet's surface, the terrorists will bunk out in subterranean shelters, waiting for the smoke to clear.

Mission: (Even *More*) Impossible

As always, the player starts out at the targeting end of some industrial-strength doomsday weapons. Resources are limited, time is nearly up, and all the smart money is betting on the terrorists.



If military might and some flawless strategy don't surface soon, it will be time to ration out the radiation suits and lead umbrellas to the planet's doomed masses.

Fortunately for mankind, last-minute salvation may be an option. The usual government scientists working round the clock at the usual top secret bunker discover the existence of another formidable weapon; the neutron bomb. If lobbed at the terrorist weaponry in time, this bomb will eliminate the threat altogether.

Recipe for a Suicide

Of course, it won't be as easy a task as that. To make things dicey, the neutron bomb has been disassembled and scattered across a monstrous piece of real estate. Naturally, enemy forces infest this landscape; trigger-happy skimmers prowl the skies and unfriendly cannons litter the plains. While combing every inch of the 6400-square-kilometer game map for sections of the bomb, the player will have to dodge or destroy legions of hostile war machines, juggling precious fuel and supplies all the while.

Armour-Geddon is decidedly tough. It is not the sort of game that will give up after a few nights, or even weeks. Neither is it a series of unrelated skirmishes. It *is*, in fact, *a full tour of duty*.

Storyline and genre aside, what Psygnosis has done with the game is pure innovation. No longer is the sim fan restricted to piloting one type of military vehicle. *Armor-Geddon*'s weapons include six unique simulated vehicles of war: three aircraft (jet fighter, helicopter and bat-like stealth bomber) and three ground weapons (light tank, heavy tank and hovercraft). These are treated as "generic" vehicles not based on any real-world models, but each can be customized to the player's specifications.

Armour-Geddon is divided into two sequences: the headquarters section and the actual piloting of vehicles.

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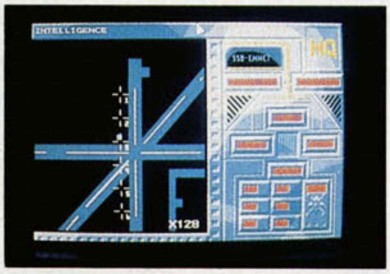
- A helicopter armed with the latest in weaponry, electronic countermeasures, functioning displays and computer-aided targeting systems.
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From the player's HQ, a number of options allow one to spy on the enemy, develop an arsenal and keep an eye on the sprawling game map. All facets of the headquarters section are accessible through a friendly point-and-click interface.



The Research & Development screen gives the player full control over the industrial aspects of war. From a limited pool, scientists can be assigned to develop weaponry or combat vehicles. The more scientists working on a particular piece of hardware, the faster it will be ready for construction. Once their task is complete, scientists automatically return to the pool and can begin work on other projects. Once developed by the scientists, engineers take up the task of manufacturing equipment for the field. Unlike scientists, engineers do not return to the pool on their own. If left with a particular project, an engineer will simply crank out vast quantities of surplus gear.

The number of gadgets and devices available for construction necessitates some tough decisions. From plain "vanilla" cannon shells to teleportation pods and cloaking devices, all sorts of techno-goodies and armaments must be prioritized. For example, if the player pours engineering might into the building of helicopters, he may find himself without night-sights to fly them by!

With the right choices, the gamer will have just enough to continue the fight. One wrong move, however, and precious time and resources will be wasted making useless scrap. *Armour-Geddon* does allow weapons to be recycled, but this will not turn back the clock. One can afford to lose a battle, but never a minute.

A Neutron in a Haystack

From the HQ, an Intelligence screen allows players a look at the area map. Zoom controls give an accurate portrait of enemy installations through a number of different possible magnifications. Looking at the game map for the first time, this reviewer knew exactly what he was up against. The sheer bulk of square kilometers is enough to intimidate anyone new to the simulation genre and enough to excite any sim fan looking for a game with real depth.

With a knowing gesture, the developers have included mobile beacons that guide any vehicle to any one of seven different locations. These beacons can be placed anywhere along the map and are an invaluable aid in the struggle to avoid becoming hopelessly lost.

In preparation for combat, an Equipment screen lets one customize and equip up to six vehicles for war. Providing that the R&D teams have been busy, tanks and fighters can be loaded with ammunition, lasers, extra fuel and other necessities. Again, tough decisions are in order, as each craft can carry a maximum payload of only *three* items.

From this point, the player is ready to leave the safety of the HQ and enter the ongoing fray. Unlike most games, the enemy does not sit idly while the player scratches up a battle plan. From the start, terrorist squadrons are in the air, hunting for the gamer's headquarters. The sounds of their strafing serves as a constant reminder that time is running out.

Upon emerging into the war zone upon a gigantic lift, the player will find one of two cockpits staring back at him. To combat confusion in the heat of battle, *Armour-Geddon* uses a single cockpit display and head's-up display (HUD) for all aircraft. Another, quite similar, cockpit and HUD graces all tanks and hovercraft. By avoiding the specifics of realistic models, Psygnosis has made the business of armored warfare much more easily understood. For this, *Armour-Geddon* may catch flak from devout sim "jocks" who cannot suspend their disbelief unless they know *exactly* what sort of aircraft or tank they're sitting in. This reviewer (coming from the action gamer's perspective, of course) does not share that opinion, however, and found that the simplified control system makes *Armour-Geddon* a very approachable game.

The battlefield side of *Armour-Geddon* is pretty typical stuff. Filled-polygon graphics are the current sim standard and, as far as polygons are concerned, *Armour-Geddon* has no new tricks to teach. One would think that Psygnosis, the force behind *Shadow of the Beast* and *Blood Money*, would find some unique way to make a jagged polygon world easier to swallow. Think again. It's not a lack of talent at Psygnosis, per se, but rather a shortcoming of the entire simulation genre.

Speed, it seems, is the crucible from which simulations either rocket into glory or tumble into anonymity. *Armour-Geddon* passes the "speed test" with flying colors. In fact, at times, the game moves so quickly that the player can only hang on and hope for the best!

Fast Forward

Adjustable camera angles are an option, though there is no "VCR playback" function. In other words, there is no way to save bone-breaking crashes and flawless strikes to disk for future "ooohs" and "aaahhs." More graphic candy comes in the form of a weapons camera and a satellite view. The weapons camera is great fun, letting the gamer watch from afar as homing missiles sniff out enemy afterburners. The satellite view is a more serious tool. It gives an adjustable look at the surrounding terrain and any unfriendlies which might be lurking out of sight.

In stark contrast to the point-and-click HQ sequence, the battle sequences rely *extensively* upon keyboard commands. Until a low-priced flight yoke can sit next to every computer user's deck, intricate keystrokes will be a necessary evil. *Armour-Geddon* eases the burden somewhat by including a fold-out chart of the keyboard. It's not an actual overlay, but does point out the hot keys (in four languages, no less). Until the keystrokes have been safely committed to the player's memory, it is best to have this sheet within frantic grabbing reach.

Documentation for *Armour-Geddon* is especially well done. It is neither the typical napkin-sized European documents nor the encyclopedic bibles that haunt jargon-heavy simulations. With the aid of the 24-page booklet, this reviewer was able to start wrecking vehicles within minutes. Beginners should count themselves lucky for finding such easy-going, non-technical documentation. Hardened experts can read the manual backwards if they find it written too clearly.

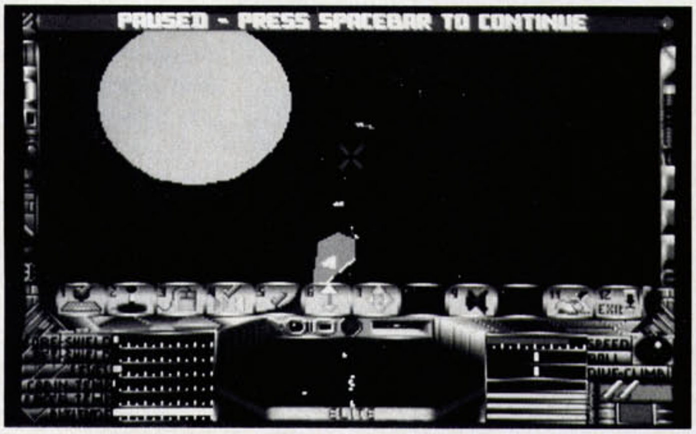
All things considered, *Armour-Geddon* does much to recommend itself to anyone looking for a well-balanced sim. For the jaded master, Psygnosis has added enough twists and innovations to the classical simulation to warrant a hard look. The six-vehicle team and research and development aspects are definitely new, "'90s" improvements on this sort of game. For the raw beginner, *Armour-Geddon* offers much under one roof and does it all with a slick, yet friendly, interface. Not bad for Psygnosis' first dwelling in the Sim city (groan). **cgw**

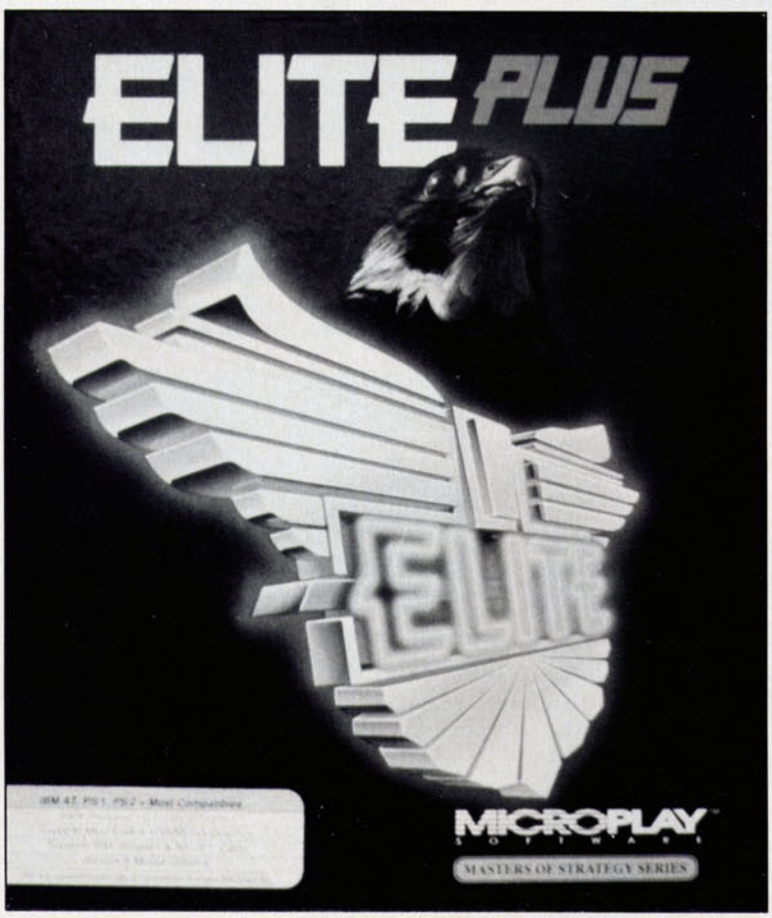
Elite-ist or D*Elite*?

Microplay's Elite Plus

by Stanley Trevena

TITLE:	Elite Plus
SYSTEM:	IBM
PRICE:	$49.95
DESIGNER:	Chris Sawyer
COPY PROTECT:	Documentation Look-Up
PUBLISHER:	Microplay Hunt Valley, MD





The original *Elite* had a devoted group of followers. Back in 1986, a game of *Elite*'s size and complexity gave the average gamer a huge universe to wander around in and explore. So, following the logic of sequels and remakes, it would only make sense that *Elite* could fly once again with a little dash of 1990s color and sound, right? Then, if extra missions are added, the game is even more likely to succeed. Of course, like any other "can't miss" formula, there is plenty of room for miscalculation.

Be One of the Few, the Proud, the "Elite"

Elite Plus bills itself as a game with "a brilliant combination of outer space exploration, intergalactic trading and political intrigue." The goal of the game is to graduate from the initial starting position, in which the player starts out with a stripped-down model of the Cobra Mark III trading and combat craft, to a position with the best-equipped craft and the highest status level, "Elite."

To imply that the player starts at the lowest possible level would be the understatement of the millennium. With a ranking of "Harmless," a ship equipped only with a few missiles, a pulse laser and a meager 100 credits (the universal form of currency), there is nowhere for the player to go but up. Fortunately, there are several ways to get credits in *Elite Plus*. Commerce, bounty hunting, piracy and asteroid mining are but a few. However, even though bounty hunting and piracy seem to offer the most colorful careers, new pilots are cautioned to build up both their ships and pocketbooks before getting too ambitious in these fields of high risk/reward ratios.

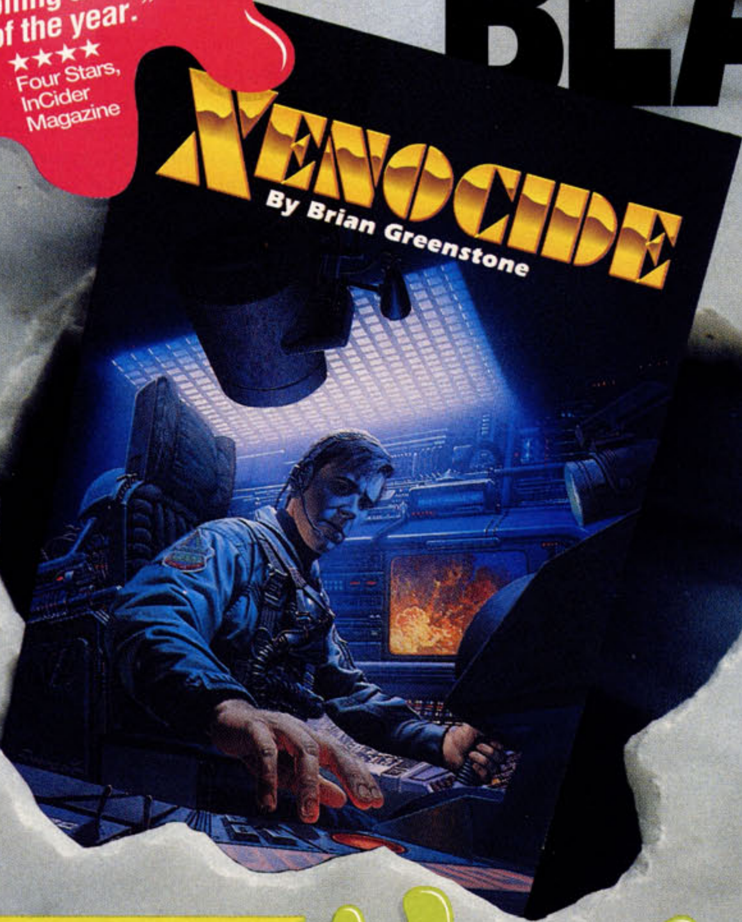
Instead, the wise pilot begins as something of an intergalactic "bean counter." With eight galaxies and several thousand possible planets to explore, the first task is to record trading prices and availability of goods for each planet. In this way, pilots can explore a few neighboring planets and discover that there is a definite economic system based on supply and demand to be serviced. If the novice pilot can find a few planets to set up a trade route and start running goods between, said entrepreneur should be able to increase profit margins and enhance the bottom line. As the credit balance grows, one can move on to more expensive items with larger profit margins. This is the safest and best way to start the game. Getting too trigger-happy too early will only result in an early death.

Unfortunately, the initial starting position may try the patience and enthusiasm of even the most long-suffering gamer. Indeed, the lack of initial resources and low profit margins at the outset may ultimately cause many to return to the place of the game's purchase rather than to explore the game's universe.

While this writer found that it is wise to make a

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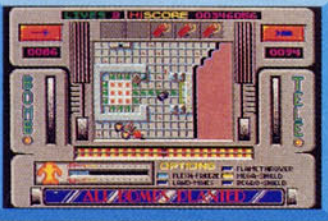
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Level 3: A scuba dive through hell. You'll need all your fighting skills to ward off the denizens of the deep, and a sharp mind to search out hidden keys required to open doors to passages leading to the level below. Find the keys and get ready for the hard part – finding your way through the correct doors!



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cargo bay extension one of the very first purchases (in order to increase carrying capacity), the fact that the designers decided to make the player manually dock the ship at every space station, pay a 50 credit fee to have a pilot dock the ship or purchase a docking computer for over 1500 credits may determine one's initial purpose. For those who are "do it yourself" types, here is a suggestion for handling the manual docking sequence. The stations' landing bays face the planet surface and are spinning. So the best strategy for docking is to head straight for the planet's surface, turn up before getting too low in altitude, center the docking bay on the screen, maneuver closer to the space station, cut speed, synchronize rotation and glide in without hitting or getting out of synch. This may be both interesting and challenging the first time through, but it gets old very fast and the player is forced to save the game after each successful docking. Hence, many will opt for a docking computer early on in order to rid themselves of this bothersome repetitious nuisance.

Join the Elite, See the Universe

Fortunately, hyperjump travel is simple. Pressing (F4) brings up a short-range navigation chart, and a shaded red circle indicates the current fuel range. The player moves the pointer to any planet on the screen and presses (F11) to get information on that planet. A planet profile contains vital information on the government, world type, GNP, tech level, population and dominant life-form, as well as a sentence describing the world in question. The GNP allows players to size up the financial state of the world, while government and world type will usually be good indicators of the potential for import and export goods. After selecting a suitable planetary destination, the player engages the hyperdrive (F6) and is deposited in that system.

The universe, naturally, is as wide open as the wild, wild west of American frontier legend. So, once the player builds up the Cobra's weapons and equipment, the battles can begin. Aside from the docking computer mentioned above, the player's early investments should include a beam laser, ECM system, missiles and fuel scoops. Fuel scoops can not only be used to gather fuel from around suns, but also for picking up debris and cargo from destroyed ships. Lasers can be fitted to the front, rear and sides of the Cobra. Front and rear lasers are a must for survival.

There are 18 ship types in the galaxy, each having unique flight and weapons capabilities. The ships are blocky solid filled polygon shapes and hard to identify at a distance. The easiest way to identify a ship is to prime a missile (F7). That way, when the target is acquired, the ship type will be displayed. Pressing (F8) at this point will launch a missile at the target. ECM operates via a function key in much the same way. When a missile is launched at the Cobra, a message alerts the pilot. Then, pressing (F6) will eliminate all active missiles. Note, however, that the player must press the ECM key again for each successive missile which is launched. This detracts from the combat by requiring the player to keep one hand constantly on the keyboard when ECM should continue functioning until it is actually switched off. It takes plenty of keyboard presses to succeed in combat, so those who like games where everything can be input via joystick are bound to be disappointed.

Another aspect of the game that will not sit well with most gamers is the "roll and dive" method used for steering the Cobra. To acquire a target, the player rolls the ship until the enemy is above or below the sights. Then, the pilot must climb or dive to line up the shot. Many of the ships maneuver wildly in front of the Elite pilot and require quick joystick jockeying in order to line them up for a kill. For the hard-to-hit targets, the player is better off to let them get behind and then blast them with the rear lasers. Some of the most evasive ships will fly right into the rear sights to get blasted into hyperspace.

Another hole in the game logic concerns the safety zones around the space stations. The space around a station is protected and ships cannot fire on one another. However, there is no real penalty for the player if he sits inside of this safety zone and picks off other ships. They will make attack runs at the player with their guns silent. This practice really pays off around Feudal or Anarchist worlds. Not only will the pilot collect a bounty for knocking off fugitives, but by using fuel scoops the pirate cargo can be scooped up and fenced at the local base. The only real penalty is a temporary fugitive legal status.

Elite Plus claims to have six missions in the new version of the game (as opposed to the three in the original). This will be news to most gamers, however, since even the *first* mission comes very late in the game. Apparently, the first mission is triggered when the player has made 32 hyperspace jumps *after* getting to the second galaxy. The purchase price of an intergalactic hyperdrive is close to 5000 credits! If one was even to make a bee-line across the first galaxy, building up credits along the way, it could take 15-20 jumps. Then, the second mission kicks in 56 jumps after mission one. These missions are too few and too late for most gamers. With all the alien races and worlds in the game, it is a real let-down that the only interaction with them rests in a spreadsheet-like trading screen or combat.

Plebeian or Patrician?

All in all, *Elite Plus* is more work than fun and most gamers will tire of play *long* before they near the end of the game. This reviewer found advancement to be slow, combat repetitive, trading tedious and rewards few. Plus, the graphics and sound are simply not up to par with other offerings on the market today.

In today's market, it takes more than a little color and sound to make a game a hit. A sure-fire formula that worked five years ago may fall flat on its disk today. A game that is marketed as "256-color" is targeted squarely at the high-end user with a fast machine, large hard disk, sound board and VGA graphics. Users with such machines demand fast action, smooth flight characteristics, efficient career tracking and satisfying character interaction. Frankly, *Elite Plus* lacks the "right stuff" to make it with the discriminating gamers of today.

Players of the original game may find it enjoyable to take a trip down memory lane with this new version of their old favorite, but most gamers probably won't have the time or space for this program in their software collection. Like the heated debate that surrounds the colorization of classic films, some classics are best left in their original form and not artificially modernized. **cgw**

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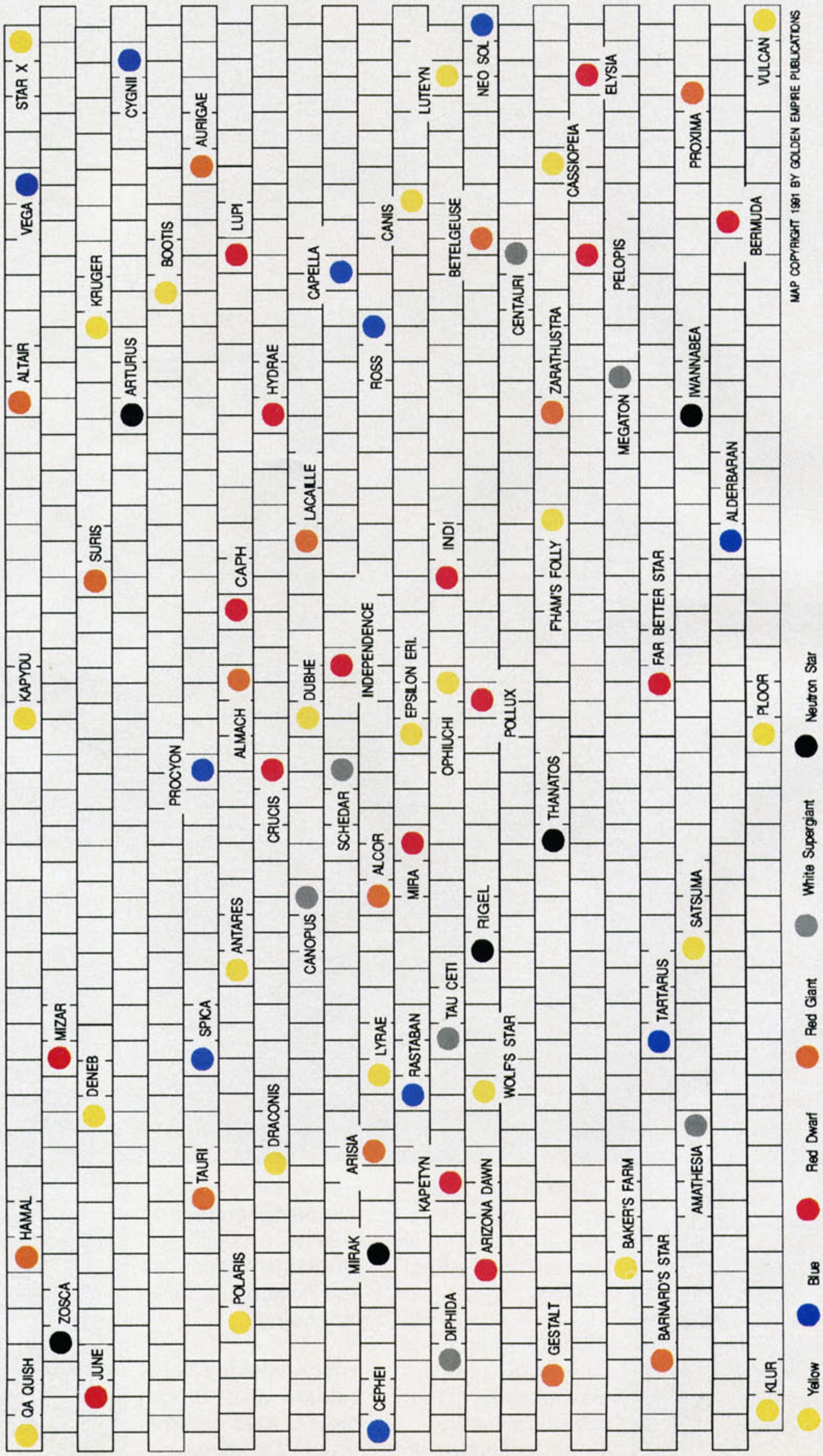
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Your Ships Have Come In

Armada 2525

by Alan Emrich

Space... the gaming frontier. For those who like their strategy games grand, nothing compares to the vastness of galactic empires connected across light years by hyperspace technology. The number of computer games on the subject may not seem as vast as the heavens, but such venerable titles as **SSG**'s *Reach for the Stars* (*RFTS*), **SSI**'s *Imperium Galactum*, **Delta Tau**'s *Spaceward, Ho!* and **jSoft**'s *Second Conflict* (not to mention **Changeling**'s forthcoming *Pax Imperia*) all share the largest visions of galactic domination. Each of these games is one of planetary exploration and conquest; scientific research and technological breakthroughs; weapons and ship production and of course strategic space battles.





Add to their ranks, now, *Interstel*'s *Armada: 2525*. Perhaps closer in kindred spirit to *Reach for the Stars* than any of the other aforementioned titles, *Armada: 2525* has its strengths and weaknesses compared to *all* of these games. Whether building, researching, colonizing or conquering, the key word to keep in mind to describe this game is: *simplicity*. Designer R. T. ("Bob") Smith of Liverpool, England, has clearly learned the values of simplicity and diversity in his years as a board, computer and miniatures wargamer. By keeping a set of simple symbology and using mathematical formulas that one can easily remember, players are only burdened with the challenge of *playing well*, rather than the challenge of *understanding how to play*.

TITLE:	Armada 2525
SYSTEM:	IBM
COPY PROTECT:	Document Check
PRICE:	$49.95
DESIGNER:	R.T. "Bob" Smith
PUBLISHER:	Interstel Webster, TX

Time Warps for No Man

Each turn of *Armada: 2525* consists of a Production Segment (which also includes research and discoveries), followed by four Movement and Combat Phases. For comparison, *Reach for the Stars* has a Movement and Combat Phase each turn, and a Production Segment every *other* turn; *Imperium Galactum* has Production followed by a pair of Movement and Combat Phases. Thus, there is the feeling of either more maneuver or less production, depending on how one looks at it, in *Armada: 2525*.

Galactic Economics

Money, as always, makes the universe go 'round. In *RFTS*, the formula was basically double a planet's population plus a blending of the industry times its social level. In *Imperium Galactum*, the economics were a bit more detailed, with "Industrial Output," "Military Output," mines, agriculture, traders, etc. all serving as part of the complex economic infrastructure of the game. In *Armada*, income and expenditures have been boiled down to their simplest (and most manageable) levels. A planet's population plus its factories equals its build points. There's a limit that factories cannot exceed the population, and there are "rich" planets which double a planet's income and "poor" planets which halve the industrial output.

RFTS and *Imperium Galactum* have more limited "shopping lists" of things to buy. While one cannot design his own ships as in *IG*, there are such a wide variety of things to discover in *Armada* that one does not feel cheated in the least. Players will discover and purchase Death Stars, Doomwingers and Nemesis fleets and wield them with undeniably maniacal intent. Costs range from two points for a "worker unit" (which is a single "saved" build point that can be used later and/or transported to another, struggling planet) to 200 points for an artificial planet (which are great to take into battle and hide behind!).

R & D and Thee

Armada: 2525's long suit has got to be all the discoveries one can make. Over 60 distinct breakthroughs and advance will be unveiled over time. The laundry list is not only extensive, but also adds such elements as biological and psychological warfare to the strategic space conquest game genre. There's nothing like watching enemy ships flee in battle because of a "mind" attack, or seeing one's foes swept by a virulent plague from the latest batch of "death virus" cooked up in the labs.

The labs, of course, are the key. "Research Centres," as they're called, get assigned to the eight different sciences and technologies. Each turn, they add to a running total in hopes of pushing it high enough to achieve the next "tech" level. The more Research Centres assigned to a particular science, the faster the discoveries will be. Many discoveries require a combination of advances in various R&D sectors, so some judicious planning must be made in order to discover the right combination of breakthroughs required for the items one wishes to purchase.

Fleet Battles

As with other games of this genre, battles take place when ships meet at stars. Both fleets deploy over the top of a generic planet, then slowly maneuver towards each other, firing projectiles back and forth across the screen in a pseudo-arcade sequence. Ships can be given orders before the battle to attack,

(Continued on page 103)

Armada 2525 Designer's Notes

with thanks to R.T. ("Bob") Smith

Here is a quick "how to" guide to get players started enjoying *Armada 2525* quickly. Some initial strategies for colonizing, research and production are offered. More importantly, the difference in playing a two-player game are described for those who seek a challenge of a more human nature.

At the start of the game, one needs to spread out quickly. Choose terran or large habitable planets to land upon in order to maximize population growth. If there is a shortage of nearby good planets, begin research into planetology immediately. Try not to settle onto too many poor planets.

Planets, Planets Everywhere...

Colonies that are near each other are easier to defend, so try to keep the empire from being too far-flung. If a player must settle an isolated planet, wait until a fleet is built to defend it. Indefensible planets constitute an open invitation to other players to attack them.

Try to have a clear plan of colonization, and be careful to build Colony Bases at the correct time! If one settles a rich planet, fill it up quickly and build a full complement of factories. However, before developing that single planet, make sure that there are several other planets going with healthy population growth rates.

After about turn ten, less pleasant planets will have to be settled. When planet populations become too high, their growth rates quickly fall to next to nothing. Therefore, a player should siphon off some surplus population in order to enable those left behind to begin to grow in number again. Once the population is developing over several planets, the game will have reached a point where players may have the technology to improve their planets' habitability ratings. Thus, large and huge planets are very useful, however low their initial habitability ratings might be.

Once level four in any science is reached, try to plant a colony on a neutron star and develop it as quickly as possible. The "supertech" ships built there are much more effective than those built elsewhere. Remember, it takes at least five Research Centres on a neutron star to develop this special "neutron" technology.

Initial Production Strategies

There are four basic strategies for one's opening builds. One can build six Corvettes and try for a quick conquest. This can be devastating if an opponent is not expecting it, but is rather risky. Building twenty Research Centres is also somewhat speculative, but guarantees rapid technological advancement. A fairly safe option is building fifteen factories since the extra production is always useful. Finally, one can build twelve transporters which will enable the shipment of population to better planets and give a player a better initial population growth rate around the galaxy. In practice, any combination of the last three of these strategies works well.

One should build plenty of factories early on, since the earlier they are built, the more benefit will be derived from them over the course of the game. However, building too many factories too early on one's home planet limits the number of people that can be moved off to colonize other stars! One must also balance the need for factories with the need for security (e.g., warships and missiles).

If a player has plenty of transports, he can ship missiles from the home planet to those further forward, thus speeding up their development. It is best to have plenty of missiles on important planets, even if they are being defended with a fleet (sooner or later, that fleet will be needed elsewhere). On some planets, it may be best to settle first with a small population and ship lots of missiles in. If one is allowed to complete the defensive build-up, then one can safely ship more people there.

Space Arms Race

Don't be tempted to rely entirely on missiles for defence, even though they provide better value initially than ships. The balance between attack and defence tends to ebb and flow throughout the game as technology develops. Make sure to maintain an adequate fleet. When in a defensive posture, build ships with high attack values to shoot down as many enemy ships as possible. When in an offensive posture, build ships with good defenses and ground attack values. Once invented, make sure that the fleet contains several carriers!

However powerful one's fleet might be, a player can still only attack enemy planets within ten squares of his own colonies. Since these are likely to be heavily defended, an effective tactic is to plant a colony with one population point as far into enemy territory as possible. This forward base will allow one to strike at the (usually) less well defended interior planets of an enemy's empire. The enemy's home planet is usually a good target.

When attacking enemy planets, try to time the attack to arrive on the fourth movement phase. This way, even if the attack should fail, so long as at least *one* warship with a ground attack ability survives, the planet will be besieged and have its production halved.

Test Tube Tactics

Throughout the game, make sure to spend enough on research. As technology levels increase, so do the number of research points required to reach the next higher level. Thus, in order to keep advancement going apace, keep building Research Centres.

In general, it is best to research into all sciences while giving priority to one or two. During the early stages of the game, some sciences might have to be neglected completely since spreading out the research too thin will only delay breakthroughs everywhere. Remember, many desired inventions require advancements in more than one science.

Which science to give priority depends on one's situation, but there are three good candidates to start the game with. If one has few good planets nearby, or discovers a rich planet, planetology is a natural priority (otherwise, leave planetology for later). Weapons research is a safe choice, but needs to be backed by commitments in construction, force fields and hyperspace. Making pyscho science a priority will pay off in the medium term. Useful inventions from pyscho sciences don't really start until hitting level three, but investing heavily and early before other players develop countermeasures can yield useful advantages.

The other sciences provide less useful benefits in the early stages, but will need to be researched later on.

The Two-Player Game

The usual number of players is six, but it is worthwhile playing with only two players (particularly if they are both human). Instead of the cagey six-player game, the two-player game is *total war*. If one chooses positions opposite each other across the short side of the map, then the game can be decided in two to three hours (or even less if playing the computer). Alternatively, starting in diagonally opposite corners will give a long game with plenty of time to experiment with technology.

Games with three, four or five players will give players more room for development than the six-player game and will tend to take longer. However, this gives more room for long-term development strategies and gives players the chance of making a comeback after earlier misfortunes. Games with three human contestants can last a very long time, thus allowing opportunities to experiment with new tactics using high-level inventions.

In a two-player game, aggression pays. Try to fight battles over enemy territory. If one loses, he loses only his fleet. If the enemy loses, he loses a planet. By forcing the enemy to use his fleet to defend his own planets, one keeps those enemy ships away from friendly stars. This aggressive strategy means one can economize on missiles and build more ships. However, the defender does have an advantage in that he is building ships where the action is, while one's own ships spend a turn moving up to "the front." This often means that the defender will win more battles than he loses. The key, therefore, is to sustain the attack. As one fleet is beaten back, another should be on its way. This forces an opponent to burn resources building missiles, and sooner or later a weak spot will be discovered.

By the same token, try not to avoid a passive defense. If the opponent is flinging a never-ending stream of ships at a player, chances are his planets are lightly defended or have no missiles at all! A raid with small forces can pay huge dividends. Clippers are well suited to surprise attacks, due to their speed.

If playing from diagonally opposite corners, then getting into the center quickly is paramount. It is vital to deny this rich area of planets to the opponent, even if one is unable to colonize it. Make sure to plant forward bases quickly to enable scouts to reach into the center and beyond. **CGW**

Armada: 2525 — Players' Aids

by Alan Emrich and Tom E. Hughes, Jr.

Interstel's intriguing new galactic conquest game *Armada: 2525* is full of everything an enthusiast of the genre could want. Comparing favorably to **SSG**'s venerable classic *Reach for the Stars*, *Armada: 2525* certainly excels in one particular regard: the field of research and development. For players who love to "discover" the sciences and technologies that will give their empires an edge over their opponents, *Armada: 2525* has what it takes.

While all the information about the availability of a certain new unit or technological discovery is available after a player researches it, it is not really recorded anywhere. It is up to players to remember that they have a psionic advantage or that a *Titan* class ship is a more powerful Dreadnought. (How much more powerful, though?)

This article presents some useful tables with all the information about all the "pieces" and discoveries one can make during a game of *Armada: 2525*. Additionally, there is information about other important formulae used in the game (presented in table format). It should serve as a player's aid and handy information sheet.

To Battle!

Certain notes about combat are in order, first. When combat occurs, units compare their attack and defense factors. If both numbers are *equal*, each shot has a 10% chance to kill its target. Otherwise, divide the attack strength by the defense strength and multiply by that 10% to get the chance to kill. For each level of technological superiority one's battle computer has above those of an opponent, an *extra* 10% chance is added to the successful kill percentage. Conversely, each level of technological superiority cuts the percentage chance of one's opponent hitting by a reciprocal 10%. In addition, a superior level of battle computer technology also affords one an earlier option to retreat from disadvantageous situations. Note that Force Shields and Total Energy Shields have no *combined* effect.

Hi, Tech!

Advancement in tech levels is handled through the use of a running total for each science. Each turn, the number of Research Centers allocated to a given science are multiplied by a number between 0.5 and 1.5 before being added to the total. When the aggregate total reaches the number necessary to achieve the next level in that science, the total is reset to zero and begins anew towards progress on the next level. Thus, over time, a single Research Center *could* reach level 6 technology, but it would take a *long* time!

The number of points necessary to reach the tech levels are as follows: 1 = 8; 2 = 16; 3 = 32; 4 = 64; 5 = 128; 6 = 256.

Additionally, on the first turn when new Research Centers are added, only the square root of the number of new Centers actually adds to the running total on that turn (fractions round down). Their full value is added to the running total normally each turn thereafter.

Once the necessary technology levels have been reached, an item has a 50% chance of "being discovered" each turn, except that discovery is automatic if all levels are above the minimum required.

The items on the Unit Description Table below are divided by their primary technology type. The tech levels are presented in the order in which they appear in the game — namely Weapons Tech, Construction Tech, Hyperspace Physics, Force Field Physics, Biotechnology, Planetology, Information Science and Psycho Science. Ship's values are presented in the following format: Attack-Defense-Planetary Bombardment-Movement. **cgw**

(Continued from page 101)

defend, hide, penetrate or go kamikaze. After a short time, players will be given the option to either retreat, fight or make an "all-out attack." Planetary bombardment portends another arcade-like sequence reminiscent of *Space Invaders*. Players don't wiggle any joysticks in these battles, they just *look* like arcade games and, fortunately, can be skipped entirely by hitting the ESC key and just getting the end of the battle round results.

Technology really shows in battles. The advent of monster ships in combat, or the discovery of hyperspace missiles, neutronium beams and sun beam technology each has a major impact on space combat. Likewise, heavy missiles and planetary shields affect space-to-ground actions.

Politics and Peace

One cannot directly court a computer player in *Armada: 2525* (as in *Imperium Galactum*), but one *can* alter their personalities. Computer players each have three ratings: one for strategy (industrialists, technologists, ecologists, militarists or expansionists); one for tactics (cautious, prudent, reckless or manic); and one for political stance (peaceful, isolationist, defensive, aggressive and xenophobic). These traits may be set by the human player(s) and even randomly "scrambled" as desired from time to time during the game! A "War Table" is a pop-up feature which shows each player's stance towards another, which ranges from peace to war and even feud (very nasty)!

Sub Space

Where *Armada: 2525* could have really used some help is in its save-game feature. It is simple enough to save a game, but it can only be done after production sequences by hitting the ESC key. Thus, the save-game feature is useless for players who play by e-mail through transferring saved game files. With no modem support either, the only way to play with multi-player humans, therefore, it to "hot-seat it" in front a single computer. The AI is challenging enough to warrant repeated solitaire play, but better connectivity would have added a lot to the value of the package and, for $50, those "value added" features can make or break a purchase decision. Also missing were more "toggleable" features: random events, varying star formulae, etc. With one planet per system, a player is often flung into contested sectors of space to scrap over what planets look promising early in the game.

Raising Shields

What *Armada: 2525* is, therefore, is another worthy addition to the strategic space genre. Offering its own unique twists, *Armada* is *not* the end-all substitute for *Reach for the Stars* (one must speculate if only SSG could produce that). *Armada: 2525*, however, *does* deserve a prominent place on the shelf of those who are enthusiasts of strategic space conquest games. Those gamers will be thrilled to have another quality game available on the subject, especially one with *Armada*'s refreshing simplicity, diversity and ease of play. **cgw**

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Flight of Intruder (AMIGA)	OCTOBER
MEGATRAVELLER 3	NOVEMBER
Avenger A-10 (IBM)	OCTOBER
Civilization (IBM)	OCTOBER
Silent Service II (AMIGA)	FALL
Star Trek (IBM)	OCTOBER
L'Empereur	SEPTEMBER
Romance 3 Kingdom II	OCTOBER
Lord of Rings (AMIGA)	NOVEMBER

ADVENT. / ROLE PLAY

PAST

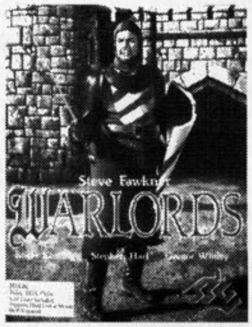
	IBM	AMI
Bane of Cosmic Forge	39	39
Champions Krynn	34	34
Curse Azure Bonds	34	34
Death Knights Krynn	34	34
Dungeon Master	-	28
Dungeon Master 2	-	28
Eye of Beholder	34	39
Gatewy Savage Frontier	34	34
Heroes Quest	39	39
Heroes Quest 2	39	39
Kings Bounty	19	34
Kings Quest 1-3	34	34
Kings Quest 4	39	39
Kings Quest 5 VGA	45	-
Kings Quest 5 EGA	39	-
Lord of the Rings	36	-
Magic Candle 2	39	-
Martian Dreams	39	-
Might & Magic 1 & 2	34	39
Might & Magic 3	39	-
Pirates	15	15
Pools of Darkness	39	-
Pool of Radiance	34	34
Secret Monkey Isle	29	39
Secret Silver Blades	34	34
Shadow Sorcerer	34	-
Space 1889	33	-
Spirit of Excaliber	34	34
Ultima 4	37	-
Ultima 5	39	39
Ultima 6	42	-

PRESENT

	IBM	AMI
Count Down	39	-
Covert Action	34	-
Elvira	37	-
Heart of China	37	-
Savage Empire	39	-
Spell Casting 101	39	-
Lemmings	32	32

FUTURE

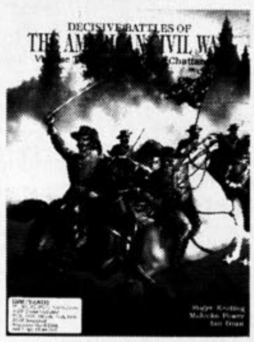
	IBM	AMI
Buck Rogers	33	33
Breach 2	21	34
Captive...Excellent!	-	34
Elite +	29	-
Megatraveller 1	39	39
Megatraveller 2	39	-
Planets Edge	39	-
Rise of Dragon VGA	39	-
Rules of Engagement	39	39
Space Quest 4	39	-
StarFlight 1	19	-
StarFlight 2	19	-
The Terminator	19	-
Time Quest	32	-
Twilight 2000	32	-
Wing Commander	45	-
Wing Co. Secr. Miss.	21	-
Wing Co. Miss. #2	21	-
Wing Commander 2	47	-



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CH-Flightstick	49	
Soundblstr (Micro)	239	
Soundmaster II	159	

STRATEGY

PRE WW II

	IBM	AMI
Am. Civil War	39	-
Bandit Kings China (KOEI)	39	39
Battles of Napoleon (SSI)	34	-
Centurian Def. Rome	16	34
Civil War Vol. 1 (SSG)	28	-
Civil War Vol. 2 (SSG)	28	-
Civil War Vol. 3 (SSG)	28	-
Dec/Gettysburg (final)(TIGL)	34	-
Genghis Khan (KOEI)	39	39
Gettysburg (SSI)	40	-
Gold of Americas (SSG)	28	28
Grand Fleet (SIMCAN)	39	-
Medieval Lords (SSI)	39	-
Nobunaga's Amb. 2 (KOEI)	39	-
Prelude to Jutland (GQ)	29	-
Red Baron VGA (DYNAMIX)	37	-
Romance 2	42	-
Romance 3 Kingdms 2 (KOEI)	42	-
Revolution '76 (BRITT)	34	-
Warlords/Enhanced (SSG)	32	32
Wings	-	29

WORLD WAR II

	IBM	AMI
Action Stations V. 3.0	32	32
Action N. Atlantic (GQ)	29	-
Air Raid Pearl Harbor (GQ)	29	-
Ger. Raider Atlantis (GQ)	29	-
Banzai (GQ)	29	-
B. Tank Barbarossa (S.C.)	39	-
Battlehawks '42 (LUCAS)	22	-
Bismarck (GQ)	29	-
Carriers At War	34	-
Fire Brigade (PANTHER)	34	34
Halls Montezuma (SSG)	27	34
In Harms Way (SIM CAN)	39	39
Kreigsmarine (SIM CAN)	39	39
Long Lance (SIM CAN)	39	39
Malta Storm (SIM CAN)	39	39
Midway (GQ)	29	-
MBT Kursk (SIM CAN)	39	39
Pacific Storm (SIM CAN)	39	39
Panzer Battles (SSG)	27	-
River Plate (GQ)	29	-
Rommel N. Africa (SSG)	28	-
Second Front (SSG)	40	40
Secret Weapons Luft.	44	-
Silent Service 2 (MICROPR)	34	-
Storm Across Europe (SSI)	39	-
Their Finest Hour (LUCAS)	39	19
Typhoon of Steel (SSI)	39	39
USS Houston (GQ)	29	-
Western Front	39	-

SCI-FI

	IBM	AMI
Fireteam 2200	34	-
Armada 2525 (INTERSTEL)	34	34
Armourgeddon (PSYGNOSIS)	-	34
Imperium (E.A.)	28	28
Overlord (VRGN)	33	33
Reach for the Stars (SSG)	28	28
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MODERN

	IBM	AMI
Chuck Yeager Air Combat	39	-
A-10E Tank Killer (DYNA)	34	34
Brigade Commander (TTR)	-	31
Conflict Middle East (SSI)	39	39
F-14 Tomcat (ACTIVISION)	28	-
F-15 II	34	34
F-15 II Desert Storm Disk	21	-
F-19 Stealth Fight (MICROPR)	39	39
Flight/Intruder (S.HOLOBYT)	39	-
Flight Sim 4.0 (S.HOLOBYTE)	39	-
5th Eskrada (SIM CAN)	39	39
Gunship 2000 (MICROPR)	**36**	**-**
Gunboat (ACCOLADE)	-	34
Harpoon v.1.2 (360)	39	39
Harpoon #2 N. Atlantic (360)	21	21
Harpoon #3 Med.(360)	21	21
Harpoon Scen. Edit. (360)	28	28
Jet Fighter #2 (VELOCITY)	42	-
M-1 Tank Platoon (MICROPR)	39	39
MBT Centr. Germany (S C)	39	39
MBT North Germany (S C)	39	39
Megafortress (360)	39	-
Nuclear War (NEWWORLD)	34	34
Red Storm Risin. (MICROPR)	34	36
7th Fleet (SIM CAN)	39	39
Tank/M1A1 (SPEC HOLO)	36	-
Team Yankee (EUROPEAN)	39	39

GENERAL

	IBM	AMI
Command HQ (MICROPL)	34	-
PowerMonger (E.A.)	-	34
RailRoad Tycoon	34	34
Sim City (MAXIS)	34	34
Sim Earth	45	-
UMS 2/Desert Storm	21	21

SPORTS

	IBM	AMI
Andretti's Racing Challenge	34	-
Blackjack	34	-
Hockey League Sim.	28	28
Indy 500	21	34
Jack Nicklaus Unltd.	39	39
Links	39	-
Links Disks (1, 2 or 3)	19	-
PGA Tour Golf	34	34
Test Drive 3	39	-
Road & Car #1	16	-
Tony LaRussa	34	-
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TV Sports Football	19	-
Video Poker I	34	-
Wayne Gretsky	-	34
Wayne Gretsky 2	36	-
Weaver Baseball 2.0	34	-

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Ship Comparison Table

Ship Type	Cost	Att	Def	Planet Attack	Move	Notes
Scout	4	0	1	0	5	
E-Boat	4	1	0	0	2	
Transport	5	0	0	0	3	transport
Corvette	9	1	1	1	3	
Clipper	12	1	1	1	5	
Destroyer	18	3	2	1	3	
Cruiser	20	2	3	2	3	
Space Spore	22	0	7	1	2	one-use bioweapon
Assault Ship	25	0	3	2	3	transport, 1 fighter
Doodlebug	30	20	1	0	2	
Dreadnought	35	5	5	3	3	
Escort Carrier	40	0	2	0	3	3 fighters
Rapier	40	4	4	2	7	
Seeder	40	0	4	1	3	reusable bioweapon
Doomwinger	50	2	6	6	7	
Death Star	55	2	10	10	3	
Titan	60	7	6	3	5	
Carrier	70	0	3	0	3	6 fighters
Nemesis	100	8	12	15	3	transport
SuperTitan	100	9	8	5	7	
Other Unit Types of Note						
Fighter	N/A	1	1	N/A	N/A	
Missile	4	1	1	N/A	N/A	transportable
Heavy Missile	8	3	2	N/A	N/A	not transportable
Sun Beam	80	50	2	N/A	N/A	limit 1 per planet
Artificial Planet	200	0	40	0	2	
Fast Attack Ships						
Rapier	40	4	4	2	7	
Doomwinger	50	2	6	6	7	
SuperTitan	100	9	8	5	7	
Medium-Speed Ships						
Scout	4	0	1	0	5	
Clipper	12	1	1	1	5	
Titan	60	7	6	3	5	
Planetary Defense Ships						
E-Boat	4	1	0	0	2	
Doodlebug	30	20	1	0	2	

Scanning Ranges

Tech Level	Max Range	Distinguish Large Ships
At Start	2	0
Initial DDS	4	2
Improved	6	0*
Long Range	9	3
Very Long Range	12	6
Ultra Long Range	18	9
Sensory Net	6	0

** = Presumed to be a bug.*

Maximum Level of Terraforming

Tech Level	TER	HAB	HOS	DED	IRR
	Planet Type				
Minor TF	8	6	4	1	0
Substantial TF	9	7	5	3	2
Major TF	9	8	7	4	3
Complete TF	9	9	8	6	5

Population Growth Formula

Growth Rate = 2 + (% of planet empty / 3) x "Habitability Multiplier". The Habitability Multipliers are given below (note that no growth can occur on planets with a Habitability Rating less than three):

Planet's Habitability Rating	Habitability Multiplier
0-2	0
3	15%
4	30%
5	50%
6	62%
7	74%
8	87%
9	100%

Tables Used to Determine Initial Set-Up:

Key: Y = Yellow, RG = Red Giant, RD = Red Dwarf, B = Blue, WS = White Supergiant and N = Neutron star.

Percent Chance That a Star Has a Planet

Star	Y	RG	RD	B	WS	N
Percent	95	70	90	90	90	50

Percent Chance of Planet Type

Planet	Y	RG	RD	B	WS	N
TER	60	5	30	15	10	0
HAB	15	25	30	15	10	0
HOS	15	40	20	15	10	20
DED	9	25	19	35	20	50
IRR	1	5	1	20	50	30

Percent Chance of Planet Size

	TER	HAB	HOS	DED	IRR
Tiny	5	10	20	30	40
Small	10	10	20	30	40
Medium	45	30	20	30	20
Large	35	40	20	10	—
Huge	5	10	20	—	—

Initial Habitability

Planet	TER	HAB	HOS	DED	IRR
Factor	7 or 8	3 or 4	2 or 3	1	0

Percent Chance of Being Rich/Poor

Size	Y	RG	RD	B	WS	N
Tiny	20/5	20/7	10/10	60/2	60/2	20/5
Small	10/10	10/15	5/20	30/5	30/5	10/10
Medium	2/20	2/30	1/40	7/10	7/10	2/20
Large	0/25	0/37	0/50	0/12	0/12	0/25
Huge	0/30	0/45	0/60	0/15	0/15	0/30

Unit Description Table

Technology	*Name*	*Cost*	*Notes (AT-DF-PB-MV)*
At Start Builds			
At Start	Factory	4	Each factory on a planet contributes one build point, provided that the population is at least as great as the number of factories.
At Start	Work Unit	2	Work Units can be built, stored and exchanged for build points at a later date. However, each Work Unit is only worth *one* build point. Work Units may also be transported between planets.
At Start	Missile	4	Missiles are used to defend planets from attack by enemy ships. Each Missile has an attack and defense of 1.
At Start	Research Center	3	Research Centers provide research points which are invested in science and technology.
At Start	Colony Base	3	Colony Bases are used to start new colonies. A Colony Base *must* be landed with the first colonists. Colony Bases can be used to start colonies on TER, HAB and HOS type planets.
At Start	Scout	4	0-1-0-5. Fast, unarmed ship used to gather information.
At Start	Corvette	9	1-1-1-3. Small warship with ground attack ability.
At Start	Transporter	5	0-0-0-3. Unarmed, unarmored transport.
At Start	E-Boat	4	1-0-0-2. Cheap but slow warship with no ground attack ability.
At Start	Extend Planet	10	This clears more space on the planet's surface so that more inhabitants can live on it. The amount by which the planet is extended depends on its original size. A planet may only be extended once per turn.
Weapons Tech:			
W-C-H-F-B-P-I-Ps (Technology Types)			
1-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0	Destroyer	18	3-2-1-3. "Air superiority" warship.
1-0-0-1-0-0-0-0-0	Cruiser	20	2-3-2-3. General purpose warship with good ground attack ability.
1-1-1-1-0-0-0-0-0	Assault Ship	25	0-3-2-3. Armored transport with ground attack ability and one fighter.
2-0-0-1-0-0-0-0-0	Dreadnought	35	5-5-3-3. Powerful all-around warship.
2-0-0-1-0-0-0-0-0	Heavy Missile	8	Used for planetary defense. More powerful than the standard type but not transportable. Each heavy missile has an attack of 3 and a defense of 2.
3-0-2-1-0-0-0-0-0	Titan	60	7-6-3-5. Faster, more powerful Dreadnought.
3-2-2-3-0-0-0-0-0	Deathstar	55	2-10-10-3. Very tough ground attack ship.
4-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0	Doodlebug	30	20-1-0-2. Disposable home defense warship. Its high attack value means that it may kill expensive enemy ships.
4-0-0-2-0-0-0-0-0	Neutron Beam	**	Fitted to all ships built at neutron stars of ≥2 attack and defense strength. It is a beam of small neutronium particles that can penetrate any shield. Counts any target ship's defenses as only one. No extra ground attack ability, but negates the effect of planetary shields.
4-4-0-0-0-4-0-0	Planetary Self Destruct	30	Bomb placed in planet's core. May be activated at any time by the building player even if the planet is no longer owned. Only deactivated if another such device is built there by another player.
4-3-2-4-0-0-0-0-0	Nemesis	100	8-12-15-3. Superior Deathstar with transport ability.
4-1-4-4-0-0-0-0-0	Supertitan	100	9-8-5-7. Very fast and very powerful.
6-2-0-0-0-0-0-0-0	Sun Beam Construction	80	Powerful weapon that may be built on a planet to protect it. Quickly destroys an attacking enemy fleet. Each sun beam has an attack of 50 and a defense of 2. (May not be built at neutron stars as they have no sun.)
Construction Tech:			
1-2-0-0-0-0-0-0-0	Escort Carrier	40	0-2-0-3. Fighter base ship. Fighter losses are replaced between battles. Three fighters.
0-3-0-0-0-0-0-0-0	Robotic Factory	5	These act like normal factories, but as many as *twice the number* as the population are allowed on one planet.
1-3-1-0-0-0-0-0-0	Carrier	70	0-3-0-3. Fighter base ship. Fighter losses are replaced between battles. Six fighters.
0-3-0-3-0-0-0-0-0	Force Shields	70	Encloses planet in a protective Force Shield that halves the effect of any attack on missiles on the planet's surface. Building several on one planet does *not* increase their effect, but guards against one being knocked out. Limit of seven per planet.
3-5-2-2-0-2-0-0	Neutronium Bomb	60**	Made from the interior of neutron stars. The bomb must be transported to an enemy planet by an assault ship, Nemesis or transport. If dropped, the planet will be destroyed. May only be built at neutron stars.
0-6-0-0-0-3-0-0	Artificial Planet	200	0-40-0-2. An artificial planet may be moved like a ship until it is fixed in position around a star that has no existing planet. It is then treated as a normal small planet, and a colony may be placed on it.
Hyperspace Physics:			
0-0-1-0-0-0-0-0-0	Clipper	12	1-1-1-5. A fast Corvette.
2-0-4-2-0-0-0-0-0	Rapier	40	4-4-2-7. Very fast, medium-sized general purpose ship.
3-1-4-3-0-0-0-0-0	Doomwinger	50	2-6-6-7. Very fast ground attack ship.
2-0-5-0-0-0-0-0-0	Hyperspace Missiles	*	Will be fitted to all newly built ships. These are fired at long range against random ships in the enemy fleet and have a 50% increase in hit probability versus ships without Hyperspace Shields.
0-0-5-5-0-0-0-0-0	Hyperspace Shield	*	Will be fitted to all newly built ships. Stops the extra attack effectiveness of Hyperspace Missiles.
0-2-6-0-0-0-0-0-0	Teleportation	75	Allows instantaneous movement between planets with Teleport Points for any ships and their cargoes.
Force Field Physics:			
0-0-0-3-0-0-0-3	Partial Mental Shield	*	Provides some protection from mental attacks and power.
0-0-0-4-0-0-0-0-0	Neutronium Shields	**	Fitted to all ships built at neutron stars. Doubles defense strength.
0-0-0-5-0-0-0-4	Full Mental Shield	*	Provides more complete defense against all mental powers.
0-3-0-6-0-0-0-0-0	Total Energy Shield	100	Protective shield around a planet. Renders attacks by enemy energy weapons almost completely ineffective. (It destroys 90% of incoming missiles). Limit of one per planet.
Biotechnology:			
0-0-0-0-2-0-0-0	Death Virus	*	Dropped by Seeder on enemy planets to kill population. Effect depends on power of Death Virus possessed by each side.
0-0-0-1-2-0-0-0	Seeder	40	0-4-1-3. Reusable device for making Death Virus attacks. Must survive one round against enemy missiles. Biological weapon.
0-0-0-0-3-0-0-0	Improved Death Virus	*	Gives better results.
0-0-0-0-3-0-0-0	Giant Space Spore	22	0-7-1-2. Must survive one round with enemy missiles, then makes attack and is destroyed. Biological weapon.
0-0-0-0-3-2-0-0	Biosphere Wrecking	*	Reduces habitability of target planet when biological attacks are made.
0-0-0-0-4-0-0-0	Ultimate Death Virus	*	There is no antidote to this form.
0-0-0-0-6-0-0-0	Inorganic Bacteria	*	These non-carbon based life forms, dropped by a Seeder or Spore attack, will gradually eat away the missiles, factories and other installations on a planet over several turns. This invention also protects from attack by them!
Planetology:			
0-0-0-0-0-1-0-0	Enclosed Base	10	An Enclosed Colony Base is used to start a colony on a DED planet.
0-0-0-0-0-1-0-0	Minor Terraforming	20	Terraforming a planet improves its habitability rating, which in turn improves the population growth rate. The extent to which a planet may be terraformed depends on the planet type and the player's terraforming technology.
0-0-0-0-0-2-0-0	Substantial Terraforming	*	Improves the habitability of a planet.
0-0-0-1-0-2-0-0	Protected Base	20	Protected Colony Bases are used to start colonies on IRR planets.
0-0-0-0-1-3-0-0	Major Terraforming	*	Improves the habitability of a planet.
0-0-0-0-2-4-0-0	Complete Terraforming	*	Improves the habitability of a planet.
0-0-0-0-5-6-0-0	Gaia	*	You have achieved complete harmony between the life forms of your planets. The production of colonists of any planet of 5 or greater habitability is doubled.
Information Science:			
0-0-0-0-0-0-1-0	Deep Space Scanning	*	Allows enemy ships to be detected deeper in space by a Deep Space Scanner. Use the "View Ships" option on the menu.
0-0-0-0-0-0-2-0	Improved DDS	*	Allows deep space scanning (DDS) further into space.
0-0-0-0-0-0-2-0	Battle Computers	*	Improves combat effectiveness of all your ships.
0-0-0-0-0-0-3-0	Long Range DDS	*	Allows deep space scanning further into space.
0-0-0-0-0-2-3-0	Planet Scanning	*	Enables planet types to be ascertained by deep space scanners.
0-0-0-0-0-0-4-0	Improved Battle Computers	*	Further improves the combat effectiveness of all your ships.
0-2-0-0-0-0-4-0	Very Long Range DDS	*	Allows deep space scanning (DDS) further into space.
0-0-0-0-0-0-5-0	Research Computers	*	Powerful computers that improve the effectiveness of your Research Centers by 25%.
0-0-0-0-0-2-5-0	Colony Scanning	*	Enables enemy colonies to be seen by Deep Space Scanners.
0-1-0-2-0-0-5-0	Stealth	*	Will be fitted to all newly built ships. Prevents them from being detected by enemy scanners.
0-3-0-0-0-0-5-0	Ultra Long Range DDS	*	Allows deep space scanning (DDS) further into space.
0-0-0-0-0-0-6-0	Unlimited Communication	*	Allows ships to be moved to any star, even if further than ten spaces from a colony.
Psycho Science:			
0-0-0-0-0-0-0-2	Local Despair	*	Mental attack to cause individual ship commanders to withdraw from battle.
0-0-0-0-0-0-0-2	Kamikaze Pilots	*	Ships with *Banzai* orders attempt to ram the enemy. This doubles the ship's chance of being shot, but allows ram attacks at triple normal strength.
0-0-0-0-0-0-0-3	Plea for Mercy	*	Mental plea that will prevent the enemy from killing the population on captured planets.
0-0-0-0-0-0-0-4	Mass Despair	*	Mental attack to cause enemy ships to withdraw from battle.
0-0-0-0-0-0-0-4	Willing Slaves	*	Mental inducement that makes captured population work more willingly for you.
0-0-0-0-0-0-2-4	Sensory Net	*	Allows sensing of enemy ships far out into space.
0-0-0-0-0-0-0-5	Global Despair	*	Mental attack that may cause a planet to surrender before its defences are breached.
0-0-0-0-0-0-0-6	Total Conversion	*	Mental inducement that converts any captured people permanently to your side. They are then treated the same as your own population.

*** = Has no "cost."** **** = Special Neutron Star Tech (See rules p.11, last paragraph).**



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C*R*P*G*S

(Continued from page 20)

dungeon. This requires running two parties alternately, one good and one evil. Aside from that novelty, and a change in the monster graphics, there is little to distinguish it from the previous two games.

Wizardry IV: The Return of Werdna
Sir-Tech
Review: #41 (November, 1987)

Wizardry IV is an inverse: instead of being the good guy, you play the evil Werdna, making his slow way up through the dungeon to retrieve the amulet of power. Along the way, you can summon a variety of nasty critters to help you in your fights against wandering bands of adventurers who want to keep you down. In addition, there is a raft of diabolical puzzles to solve as Werdna treks upward to the exit. When he gets there, the second half of the game begins. This one is involved and complicated, with multiple endings, and by no means linear. It was designed primarily for the experienced, hard-core *Wizardry* player and is not for the novice gamer. *Wizardry* fans who want a good workout shouldn't miss this one.

Wizardry V: Heart of the Maelstrom
Sir-Tech
Review: #56 (February, 1989)*

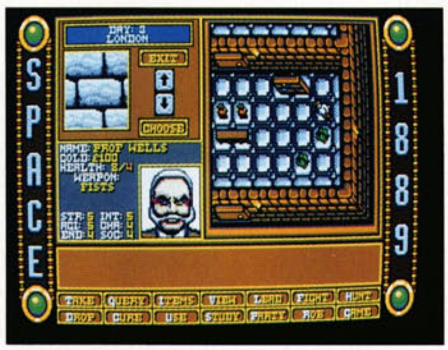
A better game than II or III, although it does away with the neatly sized dungeons, making for a lot of aggravation in mapping. This one is a combined rescue mission/kill Foozle expedition. Combat is not as well balanced as it should be, and there is a lot of silliness in the game. Monster pics are improved over previous *Wizardries*, but the dungeon graphics are still lines. This one began the trend of actually using objects during play, instead of merely having them with you. Most puzzles, however, are simple, once you have the right item (or right instructions, as the case may be). One of the better features is (are?) critters you can talk to as you progress through the dungeon, who will provide information and/or have important items for sale; it's refreshing not to have to kill everything you come across. Overall, a medium effort: better than some, not as good as others.

Wizardry VI: Bane of the Cosmic Forge
Sir-Tech
Review: #79 (February, 1991)*
Tale (tips): #82 (May, 1991)

At last, the series breaks out of the line-drawing mold and starts to get into real graphics. The bleak and colorless walls are finally a thing of the past (and about time, too). While there isn't that much variety, it's still better than outlines. This one is not a sequel to *Maelstrom*, as you have to create a brand-new group, although character creation isn't much different from before, except in some of the classes and races you can have. Much more puzzle-oriented than most previous *Wizardries*, with a lot of objects (not necessarily magical) to be used in different places and posers to unravel; however, the majority are not difficult. Interesting use of multiple endings, although how to get to them is somewhat obscure, as there are no clues. Combat in the latter part of the game tends toward imbalance. Weak in parts, but better than *Wizardry V*.

Wizard's Crown
SSI
Review: #31 (September-October 1986)

A better-than-average hack'n'slash game, featuring tactical combat and other interesting points. Fighting is extremely detailed with many options, but also somewhat time-consuming. A quick combat mode is available for the speedy dispatch of weaker opponents (done in text mode with the computer running both sides). No levels as such; experience is traded for increases in skills and stats, a very intelligent way of handling things. Good balance of magic/weapon in combat; spells do not become overwhelming. Very tough fight with Foozle at the end. A good game for the bash'em crowd.



Space 1889

Wrath of Denethenor
Sierra On-Line
Review: #37 (May, 1987)

An *Ultima II* look-alike, right down to the graphics, only not as good as the game it copies. Trek around the world to find out how to bring about the downfall of the evil Denethenor of the title. Lots of tedious backtracking, with nothing particularly new or inventive in the game. If you didn't play it, you didn't miss much.

Moldy Oldies

These games are old (*really* old) and it's doubtful you will come across any of them these days. Even if you did, most are likely to be unplayable, since they were written mainly for the old Apple II and TRS-80 lines, although some might run on the IIGS.

This collection of the first CRPGs may surprise you a little. Not all of them were of the endless hack-and-slash variety, and some contain features you might not expect in games that were designed to run on small machines. Many were slow in terms of play speed, and their graphics primitive by today's standards, but the concepts they introduced have been incorporated into most of the modern CRPGs. So take a look and see what was going on in "the good old days" when Apple was king and 64K RAM was a huge amount of memory (heh).

Aklabeth
California Pacific

This was Lord British's first published game. Bluntly, it wasn't all that terrific. *Ultima* fans may find it hard to believe, but the outdoors were absolute, unrelieved black. The only features were the little five-square symbols that represented towns (and carried over to early Ultimas), big X's that looked like scars (and represented dungeons), and way, way down on the right-hand side, a castle. In the castle was a lord who kept sending you out to kill particular monsters, after which he would raise you in rank (you started as a peasant). That was the whole "plot" of the game.

The main point of interest (other than it being Lord B's first) was the dungeoneering. This is where all the graphical efforts went. The dungeons were point-of-view, 3-D perspective, and you could see monsters in the distance, approaching you, becoming more defined as they got closer. What makes this especially noteworthy is that *Aklabeth* was the first CRPG to use this form; other dungeons typically had the overhead, bird's-eye-view look. Otherwise, *Aklabeth* was a pretty standard hack-em-up.

Adventure to Atlantis
Odyssey: The Complete Adventure
Wilderness Campaign
Synergistic Software

This trio of games by Robert Clardy, published sometime between 1979-81, were some of the finest of the early CRPGs. While mainly along the "Kill Foozle" lines, they incorporated an astonishing range of features: true wilderness, with swamps, mountains, jungles, etc., that had hazards of their own to overcome; travel by horse, ship, magic carpet or teleportation; sailing by the wind (which required re-rigging the sails when the wind changed); nonhostile travelers such as merchants to buy from or mercenaries to recruit; temples, ruins, crypts and castles to explore; a bunch of items and magical objects to use; and monsters that inhabited specific areas (so you knew pretty much what you'd be up against in many locations), among others.

Not only that, but success required a *lot* of people on your side, especially for the final battles. *Wilderness Campaign*, for example, recommended that you have 50-75 warriors — a veritable army — in your party before going to take on Foozle. And you thought you had it good if your present-day groups were six or eight characters strong!

More amazing yet, this type of detail was squeezed into games that were designed for 48K RAM Apples. Sometimes it makes me wonder about the modern CRPGs that require 640K or more, and what's using up all that space (grin).

Beneath Apple Manor
The Software Factory
N/R

One of the earliest (1978!) CRPG-type games for the Apple. Used ASCII graphics (letters, numbers, and symbols) for the display. A single character fought through successive levels of nastiness beneath Apple manor to recover the fabled golden apple. Written in Basic, it was terribly slow even by the standards of the day, but it was fun nonetheless. Interesting points: experience was traded for stat increases, gold for "brain scans" that were essentially save-game positions, and your character was able to use both weapons and magic. Even more, each new game created a random dungeon over which you had some control, such as choosing number of rooms per level and the difficulty factor (how tough the critters were). Not bad, for a game that was designed to run in as little as 16K of memory! The big drawback (aside from the slowness) was that the game had to be played in one sitting, as the save game was good only for the current session.

Bronze Dragon
Twisted Speare
Commonwealth Software
Review: #32 (November, 1986)*

Hybrid adventure/CRPG in the *Swordthrust* mold, but a little more sophisticated, as you could create a new party right from the start and go adventuring with them. Aside from the main scenario, there were twelve others that you could play. These were somewhat like *Beneath Apple Manor*, in that you had control over their creation and difficulty. This did not change the plots of the scenarios, but did confer some advantages in having an idea of what you were up against. *Twisted Speare* was a follow-up with more scenarios to play, set in the Twisted Speare tavern. Most interesting was having NPCs drop in now and then to give clues and information about the various quests. It was another fun series that did not survive the graphics onslaught.

Eamon/Swordthrust Series
CE Software

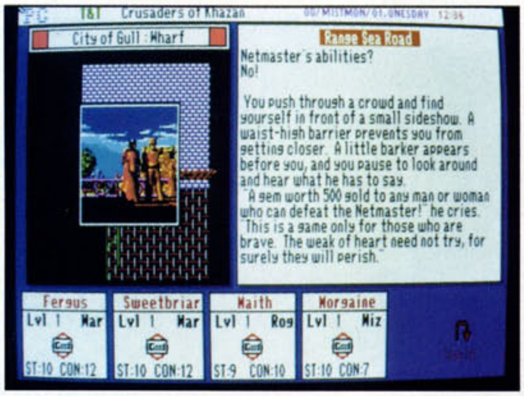
Eamon was one of the first (if not *the* first) of the adventure/CRPG hybrids, blending standard role-playing features with puzzle-solving. You created a character with physical and mental attributes and sent him out into different scenarios. These scenarios required a combination of fighting (and a little magic) and regular adventure game puzzle-solving to complete.

This game was eventually released into the public domain, along with utilities for creating your own adventures. It survives to this day, and both the utilities and new scenarios can often be found on local bulletin boards (by this time, there may be other versions besides Apple floating around, but Apple *Eamon* is still the most prevalent).

Swordthrust was a revised and enhanced version of *Eamon*. Still all-text, it allowed you to pick up other characters in a scenario who would join you for the duration of the adventure. Interestingly, monsters had a chance to either like you (and go with you), or ignore you (as long as they weren't bothered), as well as rush to rip out your throat. After the original game there were six different scenarios, with *#7: Hall of Alchemie* ending the series (the master diskette was #1), and each being more difficult than the last. The master disk was required to play any of the follow-up adventures, but the scenarios were complete games in themselves. It's a pity that *Swordthrust* did not survive into the graphic era, as it had great potential.

Galactic Adventures
SSI
Review: #3.4 (July-August, 1983)

This was a sort of follow-up to *Galactic Gladiators*, which was mainly tactical wargaming with a science-fiction flavor. *Adventures* kept the tactical combat and added a bunch of little quests for the party to complete, thereby giving a bit more to do than merely bash. It was actually quite involved, for all that the adventures themselves were simple, with people to hire (they had to be paid *and* fed), skills to perfect, and various planets to visit. Also, like several other games mentioned in this section, you had control over creating the scenarios themselves. Of course the main part of the game was still the combat, and this one (if you can get it) is likely to appeal more to wargamers than anyone else.



Tunnels & Trolls

Hellfire Warrior
Epyx

This was the true sequel to *Temple of Apshai*. It brought in some improvements, such as the game being able to remember how much gold you carried, and having an actual goal, this time rescuing a sleeping warrior queen, a quest lifted pretty much right out of Wagner's Ring cycle. It played almost the same as the previous game, although this one brought in the use of magic potions to temporarily enhance attributes. The interesting kicker to this was that some of the potions were addictive: if you used them too much, your permanent stats began to decline, forcing you to use the potions more and more (and making for more and more decline, etc). Overall, this one was better than *Apshai*, but not by too much, since the game considered the queen "just another treasure" and there was no special message for getting her out of the dungeon. Two follow-up scenarios for the Apple were published, *The Keys To Acheron* and *Danger in Drindisti*; as with the *Apshai* add-ons, they were only extra adventures with not much new about them.

Telengard
Avalon Hill
Review: 3.3 (May-June, 1983)*

Another of the early "hack'n'slash with no main goal" extravaganzas. Create a character and explore ever deeper into the dungeons below the surface. Very much influenced by *Dungeons & Dragons*, as shown by: a) the attribute range of 3-18; b) the requirement for getting treasure out of the dungeon before it counted towards experience; c) one level at a time advancement, regardless of the amount of experience acquired; and d) the spells available for use. (Do names like "Magic Missile," "Cause Light Wounds," "Phantasmal Force" and "Power Word Kill" sound familiar?) Interesting for its time, the game would be pretty dated today, especially with the advent of SSI's Gold Box series. Back then, however, it was hot stuff, and a fun way of passing the time.

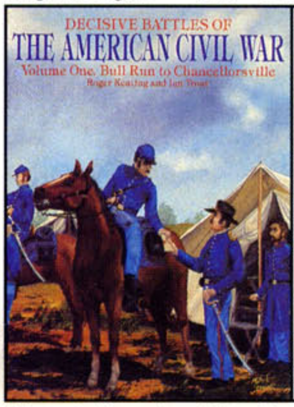
Temple of Apshai
Epyx
Review: #30 (August, 1986)

This game caused a sensation when it first appeared, being one of the earliest graphic CRPGs. A fully defined character was maneuvered through a series of corridors and rooms in a four-level dungeon. It was a hack-and-slash game, with no particular goal beyond killing monsters and grabbing treasure. The programming was not as polished as it could have been, since the game could never remember how much gold you carried, and always asked on replays what you had (a really powerful incentive to, ahem, pad a trifle). It was also very slow, being another done-in-BASIC game. However, in a day when most CRPGs were text (like *Eamon*) or had graphics but text-only combat, it was a marvel to be able to *see* the fighting, especially when your character lunged at a critter. The game was later ported over to the Atari 800 line with several improvements in the way of speed and graphics. Two add-on scenarios for the Apple were also released, *Upper Reaches of Apshai* and *Curse of Ra*, but they didn't add much new, being just extra adventures to take your character on.

One of the more interesting aspects of *Apshai* was its use of paragraphs to describe the various rooms of the dungeons (the Apple graphics being rather Spartan). This feature was later taken on by more modern games such as the Gold Box series from SSI and *Wasteland* (to name just a few), but, so far as I can tell, *Apshai* had it first. (These paragraphs, by the way, were a great means of ensuring that you didn't miss any rooms on a particular level!) **cgw**

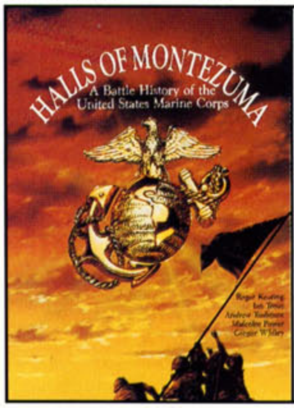
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'AMERICAN CIVIL WAR VOL 1' from **SSG** is a hex based command perspective war game. It uses **SSG**'s Decisive Battles System which takes into account the fog of war. Six scenarios are included Antietam, Shiloh, First Bull Run, Second Bull Run, Fredericksburg, & Chancellorsville. **WARPLAN** a scenario builder and **WARPAINT** an icon-terrain editor are included. **$22**

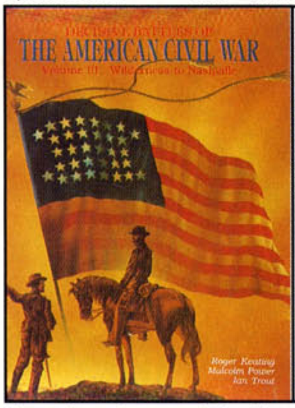
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SSG's 'HALLS OF MONTEZUMA' is a hex based command perspective war game. It uses **SSG**'s Battle Front System which takes into account the fog of war. 8 Marine Corp scenarios are included, Mexico City, Belleau Wood, Iwo Jima, Hue, Okinawa 1, Okinawa 2, Pusan, & Inchon. The game features **WARPLAN**, a scenario builder & **WARPAINT**, an icon-terrain editor. **$22**

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'AMERICAN CIVIL WAR VOL 3' from **SSG** is a hex based command perspective war game. It uses **SSG**'s Decisive Battles System which takes into account the fog of war. Six scenarios are included, Spotsylvania, Wilderness, Atlanta, Cold Harbour, Franklin, & Nashville. Features include **WARPLAN** a scenario builder, and **WARPAINT** an icon-terrain editor. Covered in Run 5 Magazine. **$22**

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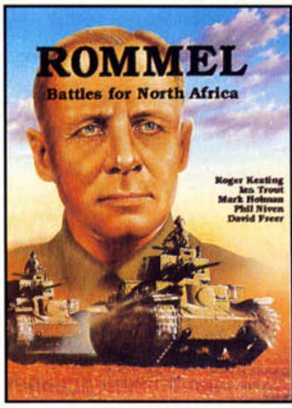
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'AMERICAN CIVIL WAR VOL 2' from **SSG** is a hex based command perspective war game. It uses **SSG**'s Decisive Battles System which takes into account the fog of war. Five scenarios are included, Gettysburg, Chickamauga, Gaines Mill, Chattanooga, & Stones River. Features include **WARPLAN** a scenario builder, and **WARPAINT** an icon-terrain editor. Covered in Run 5 Magazine. **$22**

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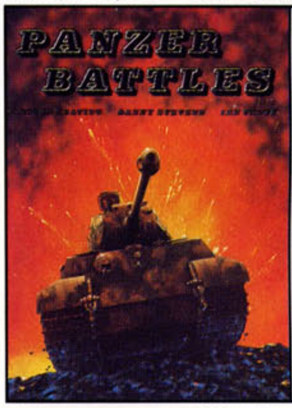


'ROMMEL NORTH AFRICA' from **SSG** is a hex based command perspective war game. It uses **SSG**'s Battle Front System which takes into account the fog of war. Eight North African scenarios are included, Syria, Sidi Rezegh, Cauldron, Alem Al Halfa, Malta, Kasserine, Maknassy, & Tebourga Gap. Features **WARPLAN**, a scenario builder & **WARPAINT**, an icon-terrain editor. **$22**

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'PANZER BATTLES' from **SSG** is a hex based command perspective war game. It uses **SSG**'s Battle Front System which takes into account the fog of war. Six Russian Front scenarios are included, Moscow, Minsk, Kanev, Kharkov, Prokhoovka, & Korsun. The game features **WARPLAN**, a scenario builder & **WARPAINT**, an icon-terrain editor. Covered in Run 5 Magazine. **$22**

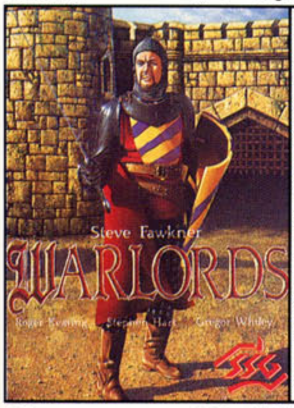
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'WARLORDS' from **STRATEGIC STUDIES GROUP** is a huge eight player strategy game of empires and armies, castles and heroes, monsters and dragons. Capture cities to increase production. Use your heroes to form alliances. Improve castles and garrison troops to defend your empire. Lay siege to your enemies' castles to destroy his armies. Ambush his heroes to destroy leadership. **$29**

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'RORKE'S DRIFT' from **IMPRESSIONS** is a detailed simulation of the battle between 137 british soldiers & 4000 Zulu warriors that took place Jan 22 1879. You command the British in their attempt to hold out aginst the onslaught. You control each man, standing, sitting, prone, aiming, firing, reloading, running or walking. With 3D map, animated combat & movement mouse support & 256 color VGA. **$34**

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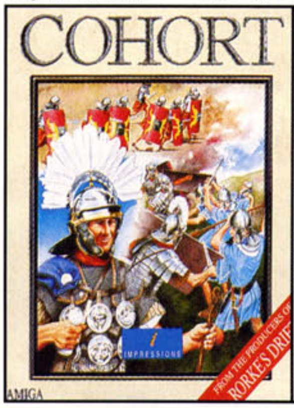
TIGLON'S 'DECISION AT GETTYSBURG' gives you command of either army at the turning point of the American Civil War. Features include real time play, historical accuracy, hidden or revealed movement and 147 square miles of detailed VGA maps. The simulation allows you to combine units, create new smaller units, transfer men or supplies and send out patrols. **$29**

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Loopz	$24
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Starflight 1	$34
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Universe 3	$34
Xenomorph	$34



'COHORT' from **IMPRESSIONS** is an unusual wargame using a miniatures style interface to cover combat between roman legions & their enemies. Features animated combat & movement, 7 unit types, infantry, cavalry, & archers, user definable army composition, 4 different maps, scenario builder, stop & give orders real time combat, 256 color VGA, & sound board support. **$34**

Dragon Strike	$34
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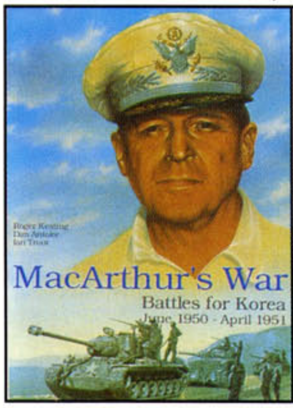
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Dragon's Lair 2	$39
Dragons of Flame	$28
Harmony	$34
Heroes of the Lance	$28



'WHITE DEATH' from **RAW SOFTWARE** is hex based wargame covering the Eastern Front in WW2. Features sophisticated computer opponent, six scenarios,digitized sound on the amiga, supply, weather effects, bunkers, tank fright, morale, rail movement, commandos, rockets, artillery spotting, barrage, headquarters, garrisons, mouse support, & play by modem. **$29**

Loopz	$34
Magic Fly	$28
Marble Madness	$18
Nevermind	$26
Pipe Dream	$28



'MACARTHUR'S WAR' from **SSG** is a hex based war game of the Korean war from 1950-51. It uses **SSG**'s Battlefront System which takes into account the fog of war. Eight scenarios are included, Across the 38th, Bulge, Taejon, Chongchon, Nakton, Imjin, Chosin Reservoir, Unsan, and Chipyong. **WARPLAN** a scenario builder and **WARPAINT** an icon-terrain editor are included. **$29**

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Circle Reader Service #26

On Silvery Disks of Splendor

Sometimes a journalist feels downright Dickensian as he tries to make sense of the fast-moving events and advances he covers. One is almost tempted to start an editorial like this one with "They are our best of hopes; they are our worst of hopes." CD-ROM, CD-I, CDTV, MMPC and DV-I all seem to blend together in this tale of more than two technologies, this revolution in an industry which is barely over a decade old.

Rumors are rampant everywhere. The grapevine tries to pass off its overripe fruit of partially correct information in a horrid vintage of "doom and gloom" gossip. We hear that a major publisher, strong enough to be traded publicly, is in dire financial straits because of their expenditures in optical research; we hear that an important publisher with deep pockets in their parent corporation is getting out of computer games altogether and we hear that several publishers have spent so much money trying to develop CD-based products that they do not really stand a chance to make any money at all on the first generation of products. Such a fate is typical in many industries, but has been almost unheard of in our industry (unless significant tool-building took place in the development process).

Rumors of our industry's imminent collapse are relatively exaggerated. It is true that, like the mild economic recovery expected worldwide over the next 12-18 months, the original wave of CD-based games will probably net less than would have been expected at an earlier date. It is also true that research and development has hurt several bottom lines.

However, it is also true that many software developers and publishers have been smart enough to learn on OPM (other people's money). They have financed their optical storage education on the research and development budgets of **Commodore**, **Fujitsu**, **NEC** and **Philips**. Hence, they do not *have* to make as much money per unit as they would in the floppy disk-based, or even cartridge-based, market.

The frightening reality is that the imminent arrival of CD-based storage technology has upped the ante on art, music and game size (number of locations in an adventure or role-playing game, number of missions in a campaign for a simulation) that game development budgets are moving past the three-quarter of a million dollar mark. Even at $60.00 (retail) per unit, an average game now has to clear 40,000 units to *break even*.

Fortunately, alert publishers have caught one major break in this flurry of difficulty. The international market is growing and expanding. **Lucasfilm Games** estimates that nearly 50% of their profits on *The Secret of Monkey Island*, for example, came from their international versions (in 11 different languages). CD technology already has made it easier to do multi-lingual *text* versions, but it looks like it might be a "mixed bag" for the "talkies" of the next generation.

The prognosis for our industry from this editor's perspective is that we will have a small upturn in revenue over last Christmas season. The trend will continue through the spring sales season of next year, but should explode as the new platforms begin to take hold and move past the initial penetration level by Christmas of 1992. The last time this editor put a date on an industry economic trend, he was a year early. If this projection is a year early, the belated growth may be "too late" for any publisher who has relied on their own capital for R & D rather than OPM. The upshot is that most of the companies gossiped about will probably *still* be here. It's the ones who are seldom mentioned that may be in trouble.

State of the Magazine: This issue continues our current practice of inducting one venerable title per month into the Hall of Fame. This issue, appropriately enough, it is *SimCity*. **Maxis** has been intelligent enough to develop a CD-ROM version of the game with OPM and has actually marketed some of the design developments as support products. Sometimes called a "god game" and sometimes called a software toy (Maxis is trademarking the designation), *SimCity* has captured the hearts and minds of more than a third of a million gamers. Will Wright's brainchild created a genre and has inspired many of us to become more active in our own *real* cities. Congratulations, Will. **cgw**

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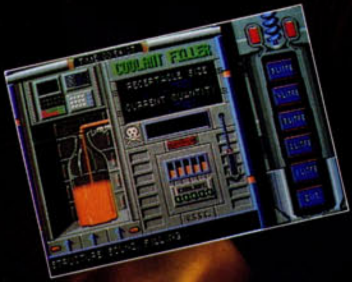
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The New Crew Has No Respect.

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